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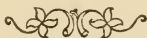
with

Charles Dickens.

BY

JAMES T. FIELDS.

"A man he was to charm and cheat the hours,
And bring a sunbeam to the stormiest day;—
In doors or out his countless magic powers
Postponed the dark and lightened all the way."



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JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY,

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DICKENS.



“O friend with heart as gentle for distress,
As resolute with wise true thoughts to bind
The happiest with the unhappiest of our kind.”

JOHN FORSTER.

“All men are to an unspeakable degree brothers, each man’s life a strange emblem of every man’s; and Human Portraits, faithfully drawn, are of all pictures the welcomest on human walls.” — CARLYLE.







IN AND OUT OF DOORS WITH CHARLES DICKENS.



Y chair is placed to-day where the portraits of Charles Dickens are easiest seen. These are likenesses of him from the age of twenty-eight down to the year when he passed through "the golden gate," as that wise mystic William Blake calls death. One would hardly believe these pictures represented the same man! See what a beautiful young person Alexander represents in this early likeness of the great author, and then contrast the face with that worn one in the photograph of 1869. The same man, but how different in aspect! I sometimes think, while looking at these two portraits, I must have known two individuals bearing the same name, at various periods of my own life. Let me speak to-day of the younger Dickens. How well I recall the bleak winter evening in 1842 when I first saw the handsome, glowing face of the young man who

was even then famous over half the globe! He came bounding into the Tremont House, fresh from the steamer that had brought him to our shores, and his cheery voice rang through the hall, as he gave a quick glance at the new scenes opening upon him in a strange land, on first arriving at a Transatlantic hotel. "Here we are!" he shouted, as the lights burst upon the merry party just entering the house, and several gentlemen came forward to greet him. Ah, how happy and buoyant he was then! Young, handsome, almost worshipped for his genius, belted round by such troops of friends as rarely ever man had, coming to a new country to make new conquests of fame and honor, — surely it was a sight long to be remembered and never wholly to be forgotten. The splendor of his endowments and the personal interest he had won to himself called forth all the enthusiasm of old and young America, and I am glad to have been among the first to witness his arrival. You ask me what was his appearance as he ran, or rather flew, up the steps of the hotel, and sprang into the hall. He seemed all on fire with curiosity, and alive as I never saw mortal before. From top to toe every fibre of his body was unrestrained and alert. What vigor, what keenness, what freshness of spirit, possessed him! He laughed all over, and did not care who heard him! He seemed like the Emperor of Cheerfulness on a cruise of pleasure, determined to

conquer a realm or two of fun every hour of his overflowing existence. That night impressed itself on my memory for all time, so far as I am concerned with things sublunary. It was Dickens, the true "Boz," in flesh and blood, who stood before us at last, and with my companions, three or four lads of my own age, I determined to sit up late that night. None of us then, of course, had the honor of an acquaintance with the delightful stranger, and I little thought that I should afterwards come to know him in the beaten way of friendship, and live with him day after day in years far distant; that I should ever be so near to him that he would reveal to me his joys and his sorrows, and thus that I should learn the story of his life from his own lips.

About midnight on that eventful landing, "Boz,"—everybody called him "Boz" in those days,—having finished his supper, came down into the office of the hotel, and, joining the young Earl of M——, his fellow-voyager, sallied out for a first look at Boston streets. It was a stinging night, and the moon was at the full. Every object stood out sharp and glittering, and "Boz," muffled up in a shaggy fur coat, ran over the shining frozen snow, wisely keeping the middle of the street for the most part. We boys followed cautiously behind, but near enough not to lose any of the fun. Of course the two gentlemen soon lost their way on emerging into Washington from Tremont Street. Dickens kept

up one continual shout of uproarious laughter as he went rapidly forward, reading the signs on the shops, and observing the "architecture" of the new country into which he had dropped as if from the clouds. When the two arrived opposite the "Old South Church" Dickens screamed. 'To this day I could never tell why. Was it because of its fancied resemblance to St. Paul's or the Abbey? I declare firmly, the mystery of that shout is still a mystery to me!

The great event of Boz's first visit to Boston was the dinner of welcome tendered to him by the young men of the city. It is idle to attempt much talk about the banquet given on that Monday night in February, twenty-nine years ago. Papanti's Hall (where many of us learned to dance, under the guidance of that master of legs, now happily still among us and pursuing the same highly useful calling which he practised in 1842) was the scene of that festivity. It was a glorious episode in all our lives, and whoever was not there has suffered a loss not easy to estimate. We younger members of that dinner-party sat in the seventh heaven of happiness, and were translated into other spheres. Accidentally, of course, I had a seat just in front of the honored guest; saw him take a pinch of snuff out of Washington Allston's box, and heard him joke with old President Quincy. Was there ever such a night before in our staid city? Did

ever mortal preside with such felicitous success as did the younger Mr. Quincy? How he went on with his delicious compliments to our guest! How he revelled in quotations from "Pickwick" and "Oliver Twist" and "The Curiosity Shop"! And how admirably he closed his speech of welcome, calling up the young author amid a perfect volley of applause! "Health, Happiness, and a Hearty Welcome to Charles Dickens." I can see and hear Mr. Quincy now, as he spoke the words. Were ever heard such cheers before? And when Dickens stood up at last to answer for himself, so fresh and radiant, with his beautiful eyes moist with feeling, and his whole frame aglow with excitement, how we did hurrah, we young fellows! Trust me, it *was* a great night; and we must have made a mighty noise at our end of the table, for I remember frequent messages came down to us from the "Chair," begging that we would hold up a little and moderate if possible the rapture of our applause.

After Dickens left Boston he went on his travels, gathering up materials, as he journeyed, for his "American Notes." He was accompanied as far as New York by a very dear friend, to whom he afterwards addressed several most interesting letters. For that friend he always had the warmest enthusiasm; and when he came the second time to America, there was no one of his old companions whom he missed more. Let us read some of these letters

written by Dickens nearly thirty years ago. The friend to whom they were addressed was also an intimate and dear associate of mine, and his children have kindly placed at my disposal the whole correspondence. Here is the first letter, time-stained, but preserved with religious care.

FULLER'S HOTEL, WASHINGTON,
Monday, March 14, 1842.

MY DEAR FELTON: I was more delighted than I can possibly tell you, to receive (last Saturday night) your welcome letter. We and the oysters missed you terribly in New York. You carried away with you more than half the delight and pleasure of my New World; and I heartily wish you could bring it back again.

There are very interesting men in this place,—highly interesting, of course,—but it's not a comfortable place; is it? If spittle could wait at table we should be nobly attended, but as that property has not been imparted to it in the present state of mechanical science, we are rather lonely and orphan-like, in respect of "being looked arter." A blithe black was introduced on our arrival, as our peculiar and especial attendant. He is the only gentleman in the town who has a peculiar delicacy in intruding upon my valuable time. It usually takes seven rings and a threatening message from — to produce him; and when he comes he goes to fetch something, and, forgetting it by the way, comes back no more.

We have been in great distress, really in distress, at the non-arrival of the *Caledonia*. You may conceive what our joy was, when, while we were dining out yesterday, H. arrived with the joyful intelligence of her safety. The very news of her having really arrived seemed to diminish the distance between ourselves and home, by one half at least.

And this morning (though we have not yet received our heap of despatches, for which we are looking eagerly forward to this night's mail), — this morning there reached us unexpectedly, through the government bag (Heaven knows how they came there), two of our many and long-looked-for letters, wherein was a circumstantial account of the whole conduct and behavior of our pets; with marvellous narrations of Charley's precocity at a Twelfth Night juvenile party at Macready's; and tremendous predictions of the governess, dimly suggesting his having got out of pot-hooks and hangers, and darkly insinuating the possibility of his writing us a letter before long; and many other workings of the same prophetic spirit, in reference to him and his sisters, very gladdening to their mother's heart, and not at all depressing to their father's. There was, also, the doctor's report, which was a clean bill; and the nurse's report, which was perfectly electrifying; showing as it did how Master Walter had been weaned, and had cut a double tooth, and done many other extraordinary things, quite worthy of his high descent. In short, we were made very happy and grateful; and felt as if the prodigal father and mother had got home again.

What do you think of this incendiary card being left at my door last night? "General G. sends compliments to Mr. Dickens, and called with two literary ladies. As the two L. L.'s are ambitious of the honor of a personal introduction to Mr. D., General G. requests the honor of an appointment for to-morrow." I draw a veil over my sufferings. They are sacred.

We have altered our route, and don't mean to go to Charleston, for I want to see the West, and have taken it into my head that as I am not obliged to go to Charleston, and don't exactly know why I should go there, I need do no violence to my own inclinations. My route is of Mr. Clay's designing, and I think it a very good one. We go on Wednesday night to Richmond in Virginia. On Monday we return to Baltimore for two days. On Thursday morning

we start for Pittsburg, and so go by the Ohio to Cincinnati, Louisville, Kentucky, Lexington, St. Louis; and either down the Lakes to Buffalo, or back to Philadelphia, and by New York to that place, where we shall stay a week, and then make a hasty trip into Canada. We shall be in Buffalo, please Heaven, on the 30th of April. If I don't find a letter from you in the care of the postmaster at that place, I'll never write to you from England.

But if I *do* find one, my right hand shall forget its cunning, before I forget to be your truthful and constant correspondent; not, dear Felton, because I promised it, nor because I have a natural tendency to correspond (which is far from being the case), nor because I am truly grateful to you for, and have been made truly proud by, that affectionate and elegant tribute which——sent me, but because you are a man after my own heart, and I love you *well*. And for the love I bear you, and the pleasure with which I shall always think of you, and the glow I shall feel when I see your handwriting in my own home, I hereby enter into a solemn league and covenant to write as many letters to you as you write to me, at least. Amen.

Come to England! Come to England! Our oysters are small, I know; they are said by Americans to be coppery, but our hearts are of the largest size. We are thought to excel in shrimps, to be far from despicable in point of lobsters, and in periwinkles are considered to challenge the universe. Our oysters, small though they be, are not devoid of the refreshing influence which that species of fish is supposed to exercise in these latitudes. Try them and compare.

Affectionately yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

His next letter is dated from Niagara, and I know every one will relish his allusion to oysters with wet feet, and his reference to the squeezing of a Quaker.

CLIFTON HOUSE, NIAGARA FALLS,
29th April, 1842.

MY DEAR FELTON: Before I go any farther, let me explain to you what these great enclosures portend, lest—supposing them part and parcel of my letter, and asking to be read—you shall fall into fits, from which recovery might be doubtful.

They are, as you will see, four copies of the same thing. The nature of the document you will discover at a glance. As I hoped and believed, the best of the British brotherhood took fire at my being attacked because I spoke my mind and theirs on the subject of an international copyright; and with all good speed, and hearty private letters, transmitted to me this small parcel of gauntlets for immediate casting down.

Now my first idea was, publicity being the object, to send one copy to you for a Boston newspaper, another to Bryant for his paper, a third to the New York Herald (because of its large circulation), and a fourth to a highly respectable journal at Washington (the property of a gentleman, and a fine fellow named Seaton, whom I knew there), which I think is called the *Intelligencer*. Then the *Knickerbocker* stepped into my mind, and then it occurred to me that possibly the *North American Review* might be the best organ after all, because indisputably the most respectable and honorable, and the most concerned in the rights of literature.

Whether to limit its publication to one journal, or to extend it to several, is a question so very difficult of decision to a stranger, that I have finally resolved to send these papers to you, and ask you (mindful of the conversation we had on this head one day, in that renowned oyster-cellar) to resolve the point for me. You need feel no weighty sense of responsibility, my dear Felton, for whatever you do is *sure* to please me. If you see Sumner, take him into our councils. The only two things to be borne in mind are,

first, that if they be published in several quarters, they must be published in all *simultaneously*; secondly, that I hold them in trust, to put them before the people.

I fear this is imposing a heavy tax upon your friendship; and I don't fear it the less, by reason of being well assured that it is one you will most readily pay. I shall be in Montreal about the 11th of May. Will you write to me there, to the care of the Earl of Mulgrave, and tell me what you have done?

So much for that. Bisness first, pleasure arterwards, as King Richard the Third said ven he stabbed the tother king in the Tower, afore he murdered the babbies.

I have long suspected that oysters have a rheumatic tendency. Their feet are always wet; and so much damp company in a man's inside cannot contribute to his peace. But whatever the cause of your indisposition, we are truly grieved and pained to hear of it, and should be more so, but that we hope, from your account of that farewell dinner, that you are all right again. I *did* receive Longfellow's note. Sumner I have not yet heard from; for which reason I am constantly bringing telescopes to bear on the ferry-boat, in hopes to see him coming over, accompanied by a modest portmanteau.

To say anything about this wonderful place would be sheer nonsense. It far exceeds my most sanguine expectations, though the impression on my mind has been, from the first, nothing but beauty and peace. I have n't drunk the water. Bearing in mind your caution, I have devoted myself to beer, whereof there is an exceedingly pretty fall in this house.

One of the noble hearts who sat for the Cheeryble brothers is dead. If I had been in England, I would certainly have gone into mourning for the loss of such a glorious life. His brother is not expected to survive him. I am told that it appears from a memorandum found among the papers of the deceased, that in his lifetime he gave away in charity £ 600,000, or three millions of dollars!

What do you say to my *acting* at the Montreal Theatre? I am an old hand at such matters, and am going to join the officers of the garrison in a public representation for the benefit of a local charity. We shall have a good house, they say. I am going to enact one Mr. Snobbington in a funny farce called *A Good Night's Rest*. I shall want a flaxen wig and eyebrows; and my nightly rest is broken by visions of there being no such commodities in Canada. I wake in the dead of night in a cold perspiration, surrounded by imaginary barbers, all denying the existence or possibility of obtaining such articles. If — had a flaxen head, I would certainly have it shaved and get a wig and eyebrows out of him, for a small pecuniary compensation.

By the by, if you could only have seen the man at Harrisburg, crushing a friendly Quaker in the parlor door! It was the greatest sight I ever saw. I had told him not to admit anybody whatever, forgetting that I had previously given this honest Quaker a special invitation to come. The Quaker would not be denied, and H. was stanch. When I came upon them, the Quaker was black in the face, and H. was administering the final squeeze. The Quaker was still rubbing his waistcoat with an expression of acute inward suffering, when I left the town. I have been looking for his death in the newspapers almost daily.

Do you know one General G.? He is a weazen-faced warrior, and in his dotage. I had him for a fellow-passenger on board a steamboat. I had also a statistical colonel with me, outside the coach from Cincinnati to Columbus. A New England poet buzzed about me on the Ohio, like a gigantic bee. A mesmeric doctor, of an impossibly great age, gave me pamphlets at Louisville. I have suffered much, very much.

If I could get beyond New York to see anybody, it would be (as you know) to see *you*. But I do not expect to reach the "Carlton" until the last day of May, and then we are going with the Coldens somewhere on the banks of the

North River for a couple of days. So you see we shall not have much leisure for our voyaging preparations.

You and Dr. Howe (to whom my love) MUST come to New York. On the 6th of June, you must engage yourselves to dine with us at the "Carlton"; and if we don't make a merry evening of it, the fault shall not be in us.

Mrs. Dickens unites with me in best regards to Mrs. Felton and your little daughter, and I am always, my dear Felton,

Affectionately your friend,

CHARLES DICKENS.

P. S. I saw a good deal of Walker at Cincinnati. I like him very much. We took to him mightily at first, because he resembled you in face and figure, we thought. You will be glad to hear that our news from home is cheering from first to last, all well, happy, and loving. My friend Forster says in his last letter that he "wants to know you," and looks forward to Longfellow.

When Dickens arrived in Montreal he had, it seems, a busy time of it, and I have often heard of his capital acting in private theatricals while in that city.

MONTREAL, Saturday, 21st May, 1842.

MY DEAR FELTON: I was delighted to receive your letter yesterday, and was well pleased with its contents. I anticipated objection to Carlyle's letter. I called particular attention to it for three reasons. Firstly, because he boldly *said* what all the others *think*, and therefore deserved to be manfully supported. Secondly, because it is my deliberate opinion that I have been assailed on this subject in a manner in which no man with any pretensions to public respect or with the remotest right to express an opinion on a subject of universal literary interest would be assailed in any other country. . . .

I really cannot sufficiently thank you, dear Felton, for your warm and hearty interest in these proceedings. But it would be idle to pursue that theme, so let it pass.

The wig and whiskers are in a state of the highest preservation. The play comes off next Wednesday night, the 25th. What would I give to see you in the front row of the centre box, your spectacles gleaming not unlike those of my dear friend Pickwick, your face radiant with as broad a grin as a staid professor may indulge in, and your very coat, waistcoat, and shoulders expressive of what we should take together when the performance was over! I would give something (not so much, but still a good round sum) if you could only stumble into that very dark and dusty theatre in the daytime (at any minute between twelve and three), and see me with my coat off, the stage manager and universal director, urging impracticable ladies and impossible gentlemen on to the very confines of insanity, shouting and driving about, in my own person, to an extent which would justify any philanthropic stranger in clapping me into a strait-waistcoat without further inquiry, endeavoring to goad H. into some dim and faint understanding of a prompter's duties, and struggling in such a vortex of noise, dirt, bustle, confusion, and inextricable entanglement of speech and action as you would grow giddy in contemplating. We perform *A Roland for an Oliver*, *A Good Night's Rest*, and *Deaf as a Post*. This kind of voluntary hard labor used to be my great delight. The *furor* has come strong upon me again, and I begin to be once more of opinion that nature intended me for the lessee of a national theatre, and that pen, ink, and paper have spoiled a manager.

O, how I look forward across that rolling water to home and its small tenantry! How I busy myself in thinking how my books look, and where the tables are, and in what positions the chairs stand relatively to the other furniture; and whether we shall get there in the night, or in the morning, or in the afternoon; and whether we shall be able to surprise them, or whether they will be too sharply look-

ing out for us ; and what our pets will say ; and how they 'll look, and who will be the first to come and shake hands, and so forth ! If I could but tell you how I have set my heart on rushing into Forster's study (he is my great friend, and writes at the bottom of all his letters, " My love to Felton "), and into MacIise's painting-room, and into Macready's managerial ditto, without a moment's warning, and how I picture every little trait and circumstance of our arrival to myself, down to the very color of the bow on the cook's cap, you would almost think I had changed places with my eldest son, and was still in pantaloons of the thinnest texture. I left all these things — God only knows what a love I have for them — as coolly and calmly as any animated cucumber ; but when I come upon them again I shall have lost all power of self-restraint, and shall as certainly make a fool of myself (in the popular meaning of that expression) as ever Grimaldi did in his way, or George III. in his.

And not the less so, dear Felton, for having found some warm hearts, and left some instalments of earnest and sincere affection, behind me on this continent. And whenever I turn my mental telescope hitherward, trust me that one of the first figures it will descry will wear spectacles so like yours that the maker could n't tell the difference, and shall address a Greek class in such an exact imitation of your voice, that the very students hearing it should cry, " That 's he ! Three cheers. Ho-o-ray-ay-ay-ay ! "

About those joints of yours, I think you are mistaken. They *can't* be stiff. At the worst they merely want the air of New York, which, being impregnated with the flavor of last year's oysters, has a surprising effect in rendering the human frame supple and flexible in all cases of rust.

A terrible idea occurred to me as I wrote those words. The oyster-cellars, — what do they do when oysters are not in season ? Is pickled salmon vended there ? Do they sell crabs, shrimps, winkles, herrings ? The oyster-openers, — what do *they* do ? Do they commit suicide in despair, or

wrench open tight drawers and cupboards and hermetically sealed bottles for practice? Perhaps they are dentists out of the oyster season. Who knows?

Affectionately yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

Dickens always greatly rejoiced in the theatre; and, having seen him act with the Amateur Company of the Guild of Literature and Art, I can well imagine the delight his impersonations in Montreal must have occasioned. I have seen him play Sir Charles Coldstream, in the comedy of *Used Up*, with such perfection that all other performers in the same part have seemed dull by comparison. Even Matthews, superb artist as he is, could not rival Dickens in the character of Sir Charles. Once I saw Dickens, Mark Lemon, and Wilkie Collins on the stage together. The play was called *Mrs. Nightingale's Diary* (a farce in one act, the joint production of Dickens and Mark Lemon), and Dickens played six characters in the piece. Never have I seen such wonderful changes of face and form as he gave us that night. He was alternately a rattling lawyer of the Middle Temple, a boots, an eccentric pedestrian and cold-water drinker, a deaf sexton, an invalid captain, and an old woman. What fun it was, to be sure, and how we roared over the performance! Here is the playbill which I held in my hand nineteen years ago, while the great writer was proving himself to be as pre-

eminent an actor as he was an author. One can see by reading the bill that Dickens was manager of the company, and that it was under his direction that the plays were produced. Observe the clear evidence of his hand in the very wording of the bill: —

“On Wednesday evening, September 1, 1852.

“THE AMATEUR COMPANY

OF THE

GUILD OF LITERATURE AND ART;

To encourage Life Assurance and other provident habits among Authors and Artists; to render such assistance to both as shall never compromise their independence; and to found a new Institution where honorable rest from arduous labors shall still be associated with the discharge of congenial duties;

“Will have the honor of presenting,” etc., etc.

But let us go on with the letters. Here is the first one to his friend after Dickens arrived home again in England. It is delightful, through and through.

LONDON, 1 DEVONSHIRE TERRACE, YORK GATE,
REGENT'S PARK, Sunday, July 31, 1842.

MY DEAR FELTON: Of all the monstrous and incalculable amount of occupation that ever beset one unfortunate man, mine has been the most stupendous since I came home. The dinners I have had to eat, the places I have had to go to, the letters I have had to answer, the sea of business and of pleasure in which I have been plunged, not even the genius of an — or the pen of a — could describe.

Wherefore I indite a monstrosly short and wildly uninteresting epistle to the American Dando; but perhaps you don't know who Dando was. He was an oyster-eater, my dear Felton. He used to go into oyster-shops, without a farthing of money, and stand at the counter eating natives, until the man who opened them grew pale, cast down his knife, staggered backward, struck his white forehead with his open hand, and cried, "You are Dando!!!" He has been known to eat twenty dozen at one sitting, and would have eaten forty, if the truth had not flashed upon the shop-keeper. For these offences he was constantly committed to the House of Correction. During his last imprisonment he was taken ill, got worse and worse, and at last began knocking violent double-knocks at Death's door. The doctor stood beside his bed, with his fingers on his pulse. "He is going," says the doctor. "I see it in his eye. There is only one thing that would keep life in him for another hour, and that is—oysters." They were immediately brought. Dando swallowed eight, and feebly took a ninth. He held it in his mouth and looked round the bed strangely. "Not a bad one, is it?" says the doctor. The patient shook his head, rubbed his trembling hand upon his stomach, bolted the oyster, and fell back—dead. They buried him in the prison yard, and paved his grave with oyster-shells.

We are all well and hearty, and have already begun to wonder what time next year you and Mrs. Felton and Dr. Howe will come across the briny sea together. To-morrow we go to the seaside for two months. I am looking out for news of Longfellow, and shall be delighted when I know that he is on his way to London and this house.

I am bent upon striking at the piratical newspapers with the sharpest edge I can put upon my small axe, and hope in the next session of Parliament to stop their entrance into Canada. For the first time within the memory of man, the professors of English literature seem disposed to act together on this question. It is a good thing to aggravate a scoundrel,

if one can do nothing else, and I think we *can* make them smart a little in this way. . . .

I wish you had been at Greenwich the other day, where a party of friends gave me a private dinner; public ones I have refused. C. was perfectly wild at the reunion, and, after singing all manner of marine songs, wound up the entertainment by coming home (six miles) in a little open phaeton of mine, *on his head*, to the mingled delight and indignation of the metropolitan police. We were very jovial indeed; and I assure you that I drank your health with fearful vigor and energy.

On board that ship coming home I established a club, called the United Vagabonds, to the large amusement of the rest of the passengers. This holy brotherhood committed all kinds of absurdities, and dined always, with a variety of solemn forms, at one end of the table, below the mast, away from all the rest. The captain being ill when we were three or four days out, I produced my medicine-chest and recovered him. We had a few more sick men after that, and I went round "the wards" every day in great state, accompanied by two Vagabonds, habited as Ben Allen and Bob Sawyer, bearing enormous rolls of plaster and huge pairs of scissors. We were really very merry all the way, breakfasted in one party at Liverpool, shook hands, and parted most cordially. . . .

Affectionately

Your faithful friend,

C. D.

P. S. I have looked over my journal, and have decided to produce my American trip in two volumes. I have written about half the first since I came home, and hope to be out in October. This is "exclusive news," to be communicated to any friends to whom you may like to intrust it, my dear F.

What a capital epistolary pen Dickens held! He seems never to have written the shortest note with-

out something piquant in it ; and when he attempted a *letter*, he always made it entertaining from sheer force of habit.

When I think of this man, and all the lasting good and abounding pleasure he has brought into the world, I wonder at the superstition that dares to arraign him. A sound philosopher once said : " He that thinks any innocent pastime foolish has either to grow wiser, or is past the ability to do so " ; and I have always counted it an impudent fiction that playfulness is inconsistent with greatness. Many men and women have died of Dignity, but the disease which sent them to the tomb was not contracted from Charles Dickens. Not long ago, I met in the street a bleak old character, full of dogmatism, egotism, and rheumatism, who complained that Dickens had " too much exuberant sociality " in his books for *him*, and he wondered how any one could get through *Pickwick*. My solemn friend evidently preferred the dropping-down-deadness of manner, which he had been accustomed to find in Hervey's " *Meditations*," and other kindred authors, where it always seems to be urged that life would be endurable but for its pleasures. A person once commended to my acquaintance an individual whom he described as " a fine, pompous, gentlemanly man," and I thought it prudent, under the circumstances, to decline the proffered introduction.

But I will proceed with those outbursts of bright-heartedness vouchsafed to us in Dickens's letters. To me these epistles are good as fresh "Uncommercials," or unpublished "Sketches by Boz."

1 DEVONSHIRE TERRACE, YORK GATE, REGENT'S PARK,
LONDON, 1st September, 1842.

MY DEAR FELTON: OF COURSE that letter in the papers was as foul a forgery as ever felon swung for. . . . I have not contradicted it publicly, nor shall I. When I tilt at such wringings out of the dirtiest mortality, I shall be another man—indeed, almost the creature they would make me.

I gave your message to Forster, who sends a despatch-box full of kind remembrances in return. He is in a great state of delight with the first volume of my American book (which I have just finished), and swears loudly by it. It is *True*, and Honorable I know, and I shall hope to send it you, complete, by the first steamer in November.

Your description of the porter and the carpet-bags prepares me for a first-rate facetious novel, brimful of the richest humor, on which I have no doubt you are engaged. What is it called? Sometimes I imagine the title-page thus:—

OYSTERS
IN
EVERY STYLE
OR
OPENINGS
OF
LIFE
BY
YOUNG DANDO.

As to the man putting the luggage on his head, as a sort of sign, I adopt it from this hour.

I date this from London, where I have come, as a good, profligate, graceless bachelor, for a day or two; leaving my wife and babbies at the seaside. . . . Heavens! if you were but here at this minute! A piece of salmon and a steak are cooking in the kitchen; it's a very wet day, and I have had a fire lighted; the wine sparkles on a side-table; the room looks the more snug from being the only *undismantled* one in the house; plates are warming for Forster and Maclise, whose knock I am momentarily expecting; that groom I told you of, who never comes into the house, except when we are all out of town, is walking about in his shirt-sleeves without the smallest consciousness of impropriety; a great mound of proofs are waiting to be read aloud, after dinner. With what a shout I would clap you down into the easiest chair, my genial Felton, if you could but appear, and order you a pair of slippers instantly!

Since I have written this, the aforesaid groom—a very small man (as the fashion is), with fiery-red hair (as the fashion is *not*)—has looked very hard at me and fluttered about me at the same time, like a giant butterfly. After a pause, he says, in a Sam Wellerish kind of way: “I vent to the club this mornin’, sir. There vorn’t no letters, sir.” “Very good, Topping.” “How’s missis, sir?” “Pretty well, Topping.” “Glad to hear it, sir. *My* missis ain’t wery well, sir.” “No!” “No, sir, she’s a goin’, sir, to have a hincrase wery soon, and it makes her rather nervous, sir; and ven a young voman gets at all down at sich a time, sir, she goes down wery deep, sir.” To this sentiment I replied affirmatively, and then he adds, as he stirs the fire (as if he were thinking out loud), “Wot a mystery it is! Wot a go is natur’!” With which scrap of philosophy, he gradually gets nearer to the door, and so fades out of the room.

This same man asked me one day, soon after I came home, what Sir John Wilson was. This is a friend of mine, who took our house and servants, and everything as it stood,

during our absence in America. I told him an officer. "A wot, sir?" "An officer." And then, for fear he should think I meant a police-officer, I added, "An officer in the army." "I beg your pardon, sir," he said, touching his hat, "but the club as I always drove him to wos the United Servants."

The real name of this club is the United Service, but I have no doubt he thought it was a high-life-below-stairs kind of resort, and that this gentleman was a retired butler or superannuated footman.

There's the knock, and the Great Western sails, or steams rather, to-morrow. Write soon again, dear Felton, and ever believe me,

Your affectionate friend,

CHARLES DICKENS.

P. S. All good angels prosper Dr. Howe. He, at least, will not like me the less, I hope, for what I shall say of Laura.

LONDON, 1 DEVONSHIRE TERRACE, YORK GATE,
REGENT'S PARK, 31st December, 1842.

MY DEAR FELTON: Many and many happy New Years to you and yours! As many happy children as may be quite convenient (no more)! and as many happy meetings between them and our children, and between you and us, as the kind fates in their utmost kindness shall favorably decree!

The American book (to begin with that) has been a most complete and thorough-going success. Four large editions have now been sold *and paid for*, and it has won golden opinions from all sorts of men, except our friend in F——, who is a miserable creature; a disappointed man in great poverty, to whom I have ever been most kind and considerate (I need scarcely say that); and another friend in B——, no less a person than an illustrious gentleman named ——, who wrote a story called ——. They have done no harm, and have fallen short of their mark, which, of course, was

to annoy me. Now I am perfectly free from any diseased curiosity in such respects, and whenever I hear of a notice of this kind, I never read it; whereby I always conceive (don't you?) that I get the victory. With regard to your slave-owners, they may cry, till they are as black in the face as their own slaves, that Dickens lies. Dickens does not write for their satisfaction, and Dickens will not explain for their comfort. Dickens has the name and date of every newspaper in which every one of those advertisements appeared, as they know perfectly well; but Dickens does not choose to give them, and will not at any time between this and the day of judgment. . . .

I have been hard at work on my new book, of which the first number has just appeared. The Paul Joneses who pursue happiness and profit at other men's cost will no doubt enable you to read it, almost as soon as you receive this. I hope you will like it. And I particularly commend, my dear Felton, one Mr. Pecksniff and his daughters to your tender regards. I have a kind of liking for them myself.

Blessed star of morning, such a trip as we had into Cornwall, just after Longfellow went away! The "we" means Forster, Maclise, Stanfield (the renowned marine painter), and the Inimitable Boz. We went down into Devonshire by the railroad, and there we hired an open carriage from an innkeeper, patriotic in all Pickwick matters, and went on with post horses. Sometimes we travelled all night, sometimes all day, sometimes both. I kept the joint-stock purse, ordered all the dinners, paid all the turnpikes, conducted facetious conversations with the post-boys, and regulated the pace at which we travelled. Stanfield (an old sailor) consulted an enormous map on all disputed points of wayfaring; and referred, moreover, to a pocket-compass and other scientific instruments. The luggage was in Forster's department; and Maclise, having nothing particular to do, sang songs. Heavens! If you could have seen the necks of bottles—distracting in their immense

varieties of shape — peering out of the carriage pockets! If you could have witnessed the deep devotion of the post-boys, the wild attachment of the hostlers, the maniac glee of the waiters! If you could have followed us into the earthy old churches we visited, and into the strange caverns on the gloomy sea-shore, and down into the depths of mines, and up to the tops of giddy heights where the unspeakably green water was roaring, I don't know how many hundred feet below! If you could have seen but one gleam of the bright fires by which we sat in the big rooms of ancient inns at night, until long after the small hours had come and gone, or smelt but one steam of the hot punch (not white, dear Felton, like that amazing compound I sent you a taste of, but a rich, genial, glowing brown) which came in every evening in a huge broad china bowl! I never laughed in my life as I did on this journey. It would have done you good to hear me. I was choking and gasping and bursting the buckle off the back of my stock, all the way. And Stanfield (who is very much of your figure and temperament, but fifteen years older) got into such apoplectic entanglements that we were often obliged to beat him on the back with portmanteaus before we could recover him. Seriously, I do believe there never was such a trip. And they made such sketches, those two men, in the most romantic of our halting-places, that you would have sworn we had the Spirit of Beauty with us, as well as the Spirit of Fun. But stop till you come to England, — I say no more.

The actuary of the national debt could n't calculate the number of children who are coming here on Twelfth Night, in honor of Charley's birthday, for which occasion I have provided a magic lantern and divers other tremendous engines of that nature. But the best of it is that Forster and I have purchased between us the entire stock in trade of a conjurer, the practice and display whereof is intrusted to me. And O my dear eyes, Felton, if you could see me conjuring the company's watches into impossible tea-caddies, and causing pieces of money to fly, and burning pocket-

handkerchiefs without hurting 'em, and practising in my own room, without anybody to admire, you would never forget it as long as you live. In those tricks which require a confederate, I am assisted (by reason of his imperturbable good-humor) by Stanfield, who always does his part exactly the wrong way, to the unspeakable delight of all beholders. We come out on a small scale, to-night, at Forster's, where we see the old year out and the new one in. Particulars of shall be forwarded in my next.

I have quite made up my mind that F—— really believes he *does* know you personally, and has all his life. He talks to me about you with such gravity that I am afraid to grin, and feel it necessary to look quite serious. Sometimes he *tells* me things about you, does n't ask me, you know, so that I am occasionally perplexed beyond all telling, and begin to think it was he, and not I, who went to America. It's the queerest thing in the world.

The book I was to have given Longfellow for you is not worth sending by itself, being only a Barnaby. But I will look up some manuscript for you (I think I have that of the American Notes complete), and will try to make the parcel better worth its long conveyance. With regard to Maclise's pictures, you certainly are quite right in your impression of them; but he is "such a discursive devil" (as he says about himself) and flies off at such odd tangents, that I feel it difficult to convey to you any general notion of his purpose. I will try to do so when I write again. I want very much to know about — and that charming girl. . . . Give me full particulars. Will you remember me cordially to Sumner, and say I thank him for his welcome letter? The like to Hillard, with many regards to himself and his wife, with whom I had one night a little conversation which I shall not readily forget. The like to Washington Allston, and all friends who care for me and have outlived my book. . . . Always, my dear Felton,

With true regard and affection, yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

Here is a letter that seems to me something tremendous in its fun and pathos:—

1 DEVONSHIRE TERRACE, YORK GATE, REGENT'S PARK,
LONDON, 2d March, 1843.

MY DEAR FELTON: I don't know where to begin, but plunge headlong with a terrible splash into this letter, on the chance of turning up somewhere.

Hurrah! Up like a cork again, with the "North American Review" in my hand. Like you, my dear —, and I can say no more in praise of it, though I go on to the end of the sheet. You cannot think how much notice it has attracted here. Brougham called the other day, with the number (thinking I might not have seen it), and I being out at the time, he left a note, speaking of it, and of the writer, in terms that warmed my heart. Lord Ashburton (one of whose people wrote a notice in the "Edinburgh," which they have since publicly contradicted) also wrote to me about it in just the same strain. And many others have done the like.

I am in great health and spirits and powdering away at Chuzzlewit, with all manner of facetiousness rising up before me as I go on. As to news, I have really none, saving that — (who never took any exercise in his life) has been laid up with rheumatism for weeks past, but is now, I hope, getting better. My little captain, as I call him, — he who took me out, I mean, and with whom I had that adventure of the cork soles, — has been in London too, and seeing all the lions under my escort. Good heavens! I wish you could have seen certain other mahogany-faced men (also captains) who used to call here for him in the morning, and bear him off to docks and rivers and all sorts of queer places, whence he always returned late at night, with rum-and-water tear-drops in his eyes, and a complication of punchy smells in his mouth! He was better than a comedy to us, having marvellous ways of tying his pocket-handker-

chief round his neck at dinner-time in a kind of jolly embarrassment, and then forgetting what he had done with it; also of singing songs to wrong tunes, and calling land objects by sea names, and never knowing what o'clock it was, but taking midnight for seven in the evening; with many other sailor oddities, all full of honesty, manliness, and good temper. We took him to Drury Lane Theatre to see *Much Ado About Nothing*. But I never could find out what he meant by turning round, after he had watched the first two scenes with great attention, and inquiring "whether it was a Polish piece." . . .

On the 4th of April I am going to preside at a public dinner for the benefit of the printers; and if you were a guest at that table, would n't I smite you on the shoulder, harder than ever I rapped the well-beloved back of Washington Irving at the City Hotel in New York!

You were asking me—I love to say asking, as if we could talk together—about Maclise. He is such a discursive fellow, and so eccentric in his might, that on a mental review of his pictures I can hardly tell you of them as leading to any one strong purpose. But the annual Exhibition of the Royal Academy comes off in May, and then I will endeavor to give you some notion of him. He is a tremendous creature, and might do anything. But, like all tremendous creatures, he takes his own way, and flies off at unexpected breaches in the conventional wall.

You know H——'s Book, I daresay. Ah! I saw a scene of mingled comicality and seriousness at his funeral some weeks ago, which has choked me at dinner-time ever since. C—— and I went as mourners; and as he lived, poor fellow, five miles out of town, I drove C—— down. It was such a day as I hope, for the credit of nature, is seldom seen in any parts but these,—muddy, foggy, wet, dark, cold, and unutterably wretched in every possible respect. Now, C—— has enormous whiskers, which straggle all down his throat in such weather, and stick out in front of him, like a partially unravelled bird's-nest; so that he

looks queer enough at the best, but when he is very wet, and in a state between jollity (he is always very jolly with me) and the deepest gravity (going to a funeral, you know), it is utterly impossible to resist him; especially as he makes the strangest remarks the mind of man can conceive, without any intention of being funny, but rather meaning to be philosophical. I really cried with an irresistible sense of his comicality all the way; but when he was dressed out in a black cloak and a very long black hat-band by an undertaker (who, as he whispered me with tears in his eyes—for he had known H—many years—was “a character, and he would like to sketch him”), I thought I should have been obliged to go away. However, we went into a little parlor where the funeral party was, and God knows it was miserable enough, for the widow and children were crying bitterly in one corner, and the other mourners—mere people of ceremony, who cared no more for the dead man than the hearse did—were talking quite coolly and carelessly together in another; and the contrast was as painful and distressing as anything I ever saw. There was an independent clergyman present, with his hands on and a Bible under his arm, who, as soon as we were seated, addressed—thus, in a loud, emphatic voice: “Mr. C—, have you seen a paragraph respecting our departed friend, which has gone the round of the morning papers?” “Yes, sir,” says C—, “I have,” looking very hard at me the while, for he had told me with some pride coming down that it was his composition. “Oh!” said the clergyman. “Then you will agree with me, Mr. C—, that it is not only an insult to me, who am the servant of the Almighty, but an insult to the Almighty, whose servant I am.” “How is that, sir?” said C—. “It is stated, Mr. C—, in that paragraph,” says the minister, “that when Mr. H— failed in business as a bookseller, he was persuaded by *me* to try the pulpit, which is false, incorrect, unchristian, in a manner blasphemous, and in all respects contemptible. Let us pray.” With which, my dear Felton, and in the same breath, I give you

my word, he knelt down, as we all did, and began a very miserable jumble of an extemporary prayer. I was really penetrated with sorrow for the family, but when C—— (upon his knees, and sobbing for the loss of an old friend) whispered me, "that if that was n't a clergyman, and it was n't a funeral, he 'd have punched his head," I felt as if nothing but convulsions could possibly relieve me. . . .

Faithfully always, my dear Felton,

C. D.

Was there ever such a genial, jovial creature as this master of humor! When we read his friendly epistles, we cannot help wishing he had written letters only, as when we read his novels we grudge the time he employed on anything else.

BROADSTAIES, KENT, 1st September, 1843.

MY DEAR FELTON: If I thought it in the nature of things that you and I could ever agree on paper, touching a certain Chuzzlewitian question whereupon F—— tells me you have remarks to make, I should immediately walk into the same, tooth and nail. But as I don't, I won't. Contenting myself with this prediction, that one of these years and days, you will write or say to me, "My dear Dickens, you were right, though rough, and did a world of good, though you got most thoroughly hated for it." To which I shall reply, "My dear Felton, I looked a long way off and not immediately under my nose." . . . At which sentiment you will laugh, and I shall laugh; and then (for I foresee this will all happen in my land) we shall call for another pot of porter and two or three dozen of oysters.

Now don't you in your own heart and soul quarrel with me for this long silence? Not half so much as I quarrel with myself, I know; but if you could read half the letters I write to you in imagination, you would swear by me for

the best of correspondents. The truth is, that when I have done my morning's work, down goes my pen, and from that minute I feel it a positive impossibility to take it up again, until imaginary butchers and bakers wave me to my desk. I walk about brimful of letters, facetious descriptions, touching morsels, and pathetic friendships, but can't for the soul of me uncork myself. The post-office is my rock ahead. My average number of letters that *must* be written every day is, at the least, a dozen. And you could no more know what I was writing to you spiritually, from the perusal of the bodily thirteenth, than you could tell from my hat what was going on in my head, or could read my heart on the surface of my flannel waistcoat.

This is a little fishing-place; intensely quiet; built on a cliff whercon—in the centre of a tiny semicircular bay—our house stands; the sea rolling and dashing under the windows. Seven miles out are the Goodwin Sands, (you've heard of the Goodwin Sands?) whence floating lights perpetually wink after dark, as if they were carrying on intrigues with the servants. Also there is a big lighthouse called the North Foreland on a hill behind the village, a severe parsonic light, which reproves the young and giddy floaters, and stares grimly out upon the sea. Under the cliff are rare good sands, where all the children assemble every morning and throw up impossible fortifications, which the sea throws down again at high water. Old gentlemen and ancient ladies flirt after their own manner in two reading-rooms and on a great many scattered seats in the open air. Other old gentlemen look all day through telescopes and never see anything. In a bay-window in a one pair sits from nine o'clock to one a gentleman with rather long hair and no neckcloth, who writes and grins as if he thought he were very funny indeed. His name is Boz. At one he disappears, and presently emerges from a bathing-machine, and may be seen—a kind of salmon-colored porpoise—splashing about in the ocean. After that he may be seen in another bay-window on the ground-floor, eating a strong

lunch; after that, walking a dozen miles or so, or lying on his back in the sand reading a book. Nobody bothers him unless they know he is disposed to be talked to; and I am told he is very comfortable indeed. He's as brown as a berry, and they *do* say is a small fortune to the innkeeper who sells beer and cold punch. But this is mere rumor. Sometimes he goes up to London (eighty miles, or so, away), and then I'm told there is a sound in Lincoln Inn Fields at night, as of men laughing, together with a clinking of knives and forks and wineglasses.

I never shall have been so near you since we parted aboard the George Washington as next Tuesday. Forster, Maclise, and I, and perhaps Stanfield, are then going aboard the Cunard steamer at Liverpool, to bid Macready good by, and bring his wife away. It will be a very hard parting. You will see and know him of course. We gave him a splendid dinner last Saturday at Richmond, whereat I presided with my accustomed grace. He is one of the noblest fellows in the world, and I would give a great deal that you and I should sit beside each other to see him play *Virginius*, *Lear*, or *Werner*, which I take to be, every way, the greatest piece of exquisite perfection that his lofty art is capable of attaining. His *Macbeth*, especially the last act, is a tremendous reality; but so indeed is almost everything he does. You recollect, perhaps, that he was the guardian of our children while we were away. I love him dearly. . . .

You asked me, long ago, about Maclise. He is such a wayward fellow in his subjects, that it would be next to impossible to write such an article as you were thinking of about him. I wish you could form an idea of his genius. One of these days a book will come out, "*Moore's Irish Melodies*," entirely illustrated by him, on every page. *When* it comes, I'll send it to you. You will have some notion of him then. He is in great favor with the queen, and paints secret pictures for her to put upon her husband's table on the morning of his birthday, and the like. But if he has a

care, he will leave his mark on more enduring things than palace walls.

And so L—— is married. I remember *her* well, and could draw her portrait, in words, to the life. A very beautiful and gentle creature, and a proper love for a poet. My cordial remembrances and congratulations. Do they live in the house where we breakfasted?

I very often dream I am in America again; but, strange to say, I never dream of you. I am always endeavoring to get home in disguise, and have a dreary sense of the distance. *Apropos* of dreams, is it not a strange thing if writers of fiction never dream of their own creations; recollecting, I suppose, even in their dreams, that they have no real existence? I never dreamed of any of my own characters, and I feel it so impossible that I would wager Scott never did of his, real as they are. I had a good piece of absurdity in my head a night or two ago. I dreamed that somebody was dead. I don't know who, but it's not to the purpose. It was a private gentleman, and a particular friend; and I was greatly overcome when the news was broken to me (very delicately) by a gentleman in a cocked hat, top boots, and a sheet. Nothing else. "Good God!" I said, "is he dead?" "He is as dead, sir," rejoined the gentleman, "as a door-nail. But we must all die, Mr. Dickens; sooner or later, my dear sir." "Ah!" I said. "Yes, to be sure. Very true. But what did he die of?" The gentleman burst into a flood of tears, and said, in a voice broken by emotion, "He christened his youngest child, sir, with a toasting-fork." I never in my life was so affected as at his having fallen a victim to this complaint. It carried a conviction to my mind that he never could have recovered. I knew that it was the most interesting and fatal malady in the world; and I wrung the gentleman's hand in a convulsion of respectful admiration, for I felt that this explanation did equal honor to his head and heart!

What do you think of Mrs. Gamp? And how do you like the undertaker? I have a fancy that they are in your

way. O heaven! such green woods as I was rambling among down in Yorkshire, when I was getting that done last July! For days and weeks we never saw the sky but through green boughs; and all day long I cantered over such soft moss and turf, that the horse's feet scarcely made a sound upon it. We have some friends in that part of the country (close to Castle Howard, where Lord Morpeth's father dwells in state, *in* his park indeed), who are the jolliest of the jolly, keeping a big old country house, with an ale cellar something larger than a reasonable church, and everything like Goldsmith's bear dances, "in a concatenation accordingly." Just the place for you, Felton! We performed some madnesses there in the way of forfeits, picnics, rustic games, inspections of ancient monasteries at midnight, when the moon was shining, that would have gone to your heart, and, as Mr. Weller says, "come out on the other side." . . .

Write soon, my dear Felton; and if I write to you less often than I would, believe that my affectionate heart is with you always. Loves and regards to all friends, from yours ever and ever,

CHARLES DICKENS.

These letters grow better and better as we get on. Ah me! and to think we shall have no more from that delightful pen!

DEVONSHIRE TERRACE, LONDON, January 2, 1844.

MY VERY DEAR FELTON: You are a prophet, and had best retire from business straightway. Yesterday morning, New Year's day, when I walked into my little workroom after breakfast, and was looking out of window at the snow in the garden,—not seeing it particularly well in consequence of some staggering suggestions of last night, whereby I was beset,—the postman came to the door with a knock, for which I denounced him from my heart. Seeing

your hand upon the cover of a letter which he brought, I immediately blessed him, presented him with a glass of whiskey, inquired after his family (they are all well), and opened the despatch with a moist and oystery twinkle in my eye. And on the very day from which the new year dates, I read your New Year congratulations as punctually as if you lived in the next house. Why don't you?

Now, if instantly on the receipt of this you will send a free and independent citizen down to the Cunard wharf at Boston, you will find that Captain Hewett, of the *Britannia* steamship (my ship), has a small parcel for Professor Felton of Cambridge; and in that parcel you will find a Christmas Carol in prose; being a short story of Christmas by Charles Dickens. Over which Christmas Carol Charles Dickens wept and laughed and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof he walked about the black streets of London, fifteen and twenty miles, many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed. . . . Its success is most prodigious. And by every post all manner of strangers write all manner of letters to him about their homes and hearths, and how this same Carol is read aloud there, and kept on a little shelf by itself. Indeed, it is the greatest success, as I am told, that this ruffian and rascal has ever achieved.

Forster is out again; and if he don't go in again, after the manner in which we have been keeping Christmas, he must be very strong indeed. Such dinings, such dancings, such conjurings, such blindman's-buffings, such theatre-goings, such kissings-out of old years and kissings-in of new ones, never took place in these parts before. To keep the Chuzzlewit going, and do this little book, the Carol, in the odd times between two parts of it, was, as you may suppose, pretty tight work. But when it was done I broke out like a madman. And if you could have seen me at a children's party at Macready's the other night, going down a country dance with Mrs. M., you would have thought I was a country gentleman of independent property, residing on a tiptop

farm, with the wind blowing straight in my face every day. . . .

Your friend, Mr. P——, dined with us one day (I don't know whether I told you this before), and pleased us very much. Mr. C—— has dined here once, and spent an evening here. I have not seen him lately, though he has called twice or thrice; for K—— being unwell and I busy, we have not been visible at our accustomed seasons. I wonder whether H—— has fallen in your way. Poor H——! He was a good fellow, and has the most grateful heart I ever met with. Our journeyings seem to be a dream now. Talking of dreams, strange thoughts of Italy and France, and maybe Germany, are springing up within me as the Chuzzlewit clears off. It's a secret I have hardly breathed to any one, but I "think" of leaving England for a year, next midsummer, bag and baggage, little ones and all, — then coming out with *such* a story, Felton, all at once, no parts, sledge-hammer blow.

I send you a Manchester paper, as you desire. The report is not exactly done, but very well done, notwithstanding. It was a very splendid sight, I assure you, and an awful-looking audience. I am going to preside at a similar meeting at Liverpool on the 26th of next month, and on my way home I may be obliged to preside at another at Birmingham. I will send you papers, if the reports be at all like the real thing.

I wrote to Prescott about his book, with which I was perfectly charmed. I think his descriptions masterly, his style brilliant, his purpose manly and gallant always. The introductory account of Aztec civilization impressed me exactly as it impressed you. From beginning to end, the whole history is enchanting and full of genius. I only wonder that, having such an opportunity of illustrating the doctrine of visible judgments, he never remarks, when Cortes and his men tumble the idols down the temple steps and call upon the people to take notice that their gods are powerless to help themselves, that possibly if some intelli-

gent native had tumbled down the image of the Virgin or patron saint after them nothing very remarkable might have ensued in consequence.

Of course you like Macready. Your name's Felton. I wish you could see him play Lear. It is stupendously terrible. But I suppose he would be slow to act it with the Boston company.

Hearty remembrances to Sumner, Longfellow, Prescott, and all whom you know I love to remember. Countless happy years to you and yours, my dear Felton, and some instalment of them, however slight, in England, in the loving company of

THE PROSCRIBED ONE.

O, breathe not his name.

Here is a portfolio of Dickens's letters, written to me from time to time during the past ten years. As long ago as the spring of 1858 I began to press him very hard to come to America and give us a course of readings from his works. At that time I had never heard him read in public, but the fame of his wonderful performances rendered me eager to have my own country share in the enjoyment of them. Being in London in the summer of 1859, and dining with him one day in his town residence, Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, we had much talk in a corner of his library about coming to America. I thought him over-sensitive with regard to his reception here, and I tried to remove any obstructions that might exist in his mind at that time against a second visit across the Atlantic.

I followed up our conversation with a note setting forth the certainty of his success among his Transatlantic friends, and urging him to decide on a visit during the year. He replied to me, dating from "Gad's Hill Place, Higham by Rochester, Kent."

"I write to you from my little Kentish country house, on the very spot where Falstaff ran away.

"I cannot tell you how very much obliged to you I feel for your kind suggestion, and for the perfectly frank and unaffected manner in which it is conveyed to me.

"It touches, I will admit to you frankly, a chord that has several times sounded in my breast, since I began my readings. I should very much like to read in America. But the idea is a mere dream as yet. Several strong reasons would make the journey difficult to me, and—even were they overcome—I would never make it, unless I had great general reason to believe that the American people really wanted to hear me.

"Through the whole of this autumn I shall be reading in various parts of England, Ireland, and Scotland. I mention this, in reference to the closing paragraph of your esteemed favor.

"Allow me once again to thank you most heartily, and to remain,

"Gratefully and faithfully yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

Early in the month of July, 1859, I spent a day with him in his beautiful country retreat in Kent. He drove me about the leafy lanes in his basket wagon, pointing out the lovely spots belonging to his friends, and ending with a visit to the ruins of

Rochester Castle. We climbed up the time-worn walls and leaned out of the ivied windows, looking into the various apartments below. I remember how vividly he reproduced a probable scene in the great old banqueting-room, and how graphically he imagined the life of *ennui* and every-day tediousness that went on in those lazy old times. I recall his fancy picture of the dogs stretched out before the fire, sleeping and snoring with their masters. That day he seemed to revel in the past, and I stood by, listening almost with awe to his impressive voice, as he spoke out whole chapters of a romance destined never to be written. On our way back to Gad's Hill Place, he stopped in the road, I remember, to have a crack with a gentleman who he told me was a son of Sydney Smith. The only other guest at his table that day was Wilkie Collins; and after dinner we three went out and lay down on the grass, while Dickens showed off a raven that was hopping about, and told anecdotes of the bird and of his many predecessors. We also talked about his visiting America, I putting as many spokes as possible into that favorite wheel of mine. A day or two after I returned to London I received this note from him : —

“ . . . Only to say that I heartily enjoyed our day, and shall long remember it. Also, that I have been perpetually repeating the —— experience (of a more tremendous sort in the way of ghastly comicality, experience there is none) on the grass, on my back. Also, that I have not forgotten

Colbett. Also, that I shall trouble you at greater length when the mysterious oracle, of New York, pronounces.

“Wilkie Collins begs me to report that he declines pale horse, and all other horse exercise — and all exercise, except eating, drinking, smoking, and sleeping — in the dog days.

“With united kind regards, believe me always cordially yours,

“CHARLES DICKENS.”

An agent had come out from New York with offers to induce him to arrange for a speedy visit to America, and Dickens was then waiting to see the man who had been announced as on his way to him. He was evidently giving the subject serious consideration, for on the 20th of July he sends me this note: —

“As I have not yet heard from Mr. — of New York, I begin to think it likely (or, rather, I begin to think it more likely than I thought it before) that he has not backers good and sufficient, and that his ‘mission’ will go off. It is possible that I may hear from him before the month is out, and I shall not make any reading arrangements until it has come to a close; but I do not regard it as being very probable that the said — will appear satisfactorily, either in the flesh or the spirit.

“Now, considering that it would be August before I could move in the matter, that it would be indispensably necessary to choose some business connection and have some business arrangements made in America, and that I am inclined to think it would not be easy to originate and complete all the necessary preparations for beginning in October, I want your kind advice on the following points: —

“1. Suppose I postponed the idea for a year.

“2. Suppose I postponed it until after Christmas.

"3. Suppose I sent some trusty person out to America *now*, to negotiate with some sound, responsible, trustworthy man of business in New York, accustomed to public undertakings of such a nature; my negotiator being fully empowered to conclude any arrangements with him that might appear, on consultation, best.

"Have you any idea of any such person to whom you could recommend me? Or of any such agent here? I only want to see my way distinctly, and to have it prepared before me, out in the States. Now, I will make no apology for troubling you, because I thoroughly rely on your interest and kindness.

"I am at Gad's Hill, except on Tuesdays and the greater part of Wednesdays.

"With kind regards, very faithfully yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

Various notes passed between us after this, during my stay in London in 1859. On the 6th of August he writes :—

"I have considered the subject in every way, and have consulted with the few friends to whom I ever refer my doubts, and whose judgment is in the main excellent. I have (this is between ourselves) come to the conclusion *that I will not go now*.

"A year hence I may revive the matter, and your presence in America will then be a great encouragement and assistance to me. I shall see you (at least I count upon doing so) at my house in town before you turn your face towards the lock-up house; and we will then, reversing *Macbeth*, 'proceed further in this business.' . . .

"Believe me always (and here I forever renounce 'Mr.,' as having anything whatever to do with our communication, and as being a mere preposterous interloper),

"Faithfully yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

When I arrived in Rome, early in 1860, one of the first letters I received from London was from him. The project of coming to America was constantly before him, and he wrote to me that he should have a great deal to say when I came back to England in the spring; but the plan fell through, and he gave up all hope of crossing the water again. However, I did not let the matter rest; and when I returned home I did not cease, year after year, to keep the subject open in my communications with him. He kept a watchful eye on what was going forward in America, both in literature and politics. During the war, of course, both of us gave up our correspondence about the readings. He was actively engaged all over Great Britain in giving his marvellous entertainments, and there certainly was no occasion for his travelling elsewhere. In October, 1862, I sent him the proof-sheets of an article, that was soon to appear in the *Atlantic Monthly*, on "Blind Tom," and on receipt of it he sent me a letter, from which this is an extract:—

"I have read that affecting paper you have had the kindness to send me, with strong interest and emotion. You may readily suppose that I have been most glad and ready to avail myself of your permission to print it. I have placed it in our Number made up to-day, which will be published on the 18th of this month,—well before you,—as you desire.

"Think of reading in America? Lord bless you, I think

of reading in the deepest depth of the lowest crater in the Moon, on my way there!

"There is no sun-picture of my Falstaff House as yet; but it shall be done, and you shall have it. It has been much improved internally since you saw it. . . .

"I expect Macready at Gad's Hill on Saturday. You know that his second wife (an excellent one) presented him lately with a little boy? I was staying with him for a day or two last winter, and, seizing an umbrella when he had the audacity to tell me he was growing old, made at him with Macduff's defiance. Upon which he fell into the old fierce guard, with the desperation of thirty years ago.

"Kind remembrances to all friends who kindly remember me.

"Ever heartily yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

Every time I had occasion to write to him after the war, I stirred up the subject of the readings. On the 2d of May, 1866, he says:—

"Your letter is an excessively difficult one to answer, because I really do not know that any sum of money that could be laid down would induce me to cross the Atlantic to read. Nor do I think it likely that any one on your side of the great water can be prepared to understand the state of the case. For example, I am now just finishing a series of thirty readings. The crowds attending them have been so astounding, and the relish for them has so far outgone all previous experience, that if I were to set myself the task, 'I will make such or such a sum of money by devoting myself to readings for a certain time,' I should have to go no further than Bond Street or Regent Street, to have it secured to me in a day. Therefore, if a specific offer, and a very large one indeed, were made to me from America, I should naturally ask myself, 'Why go through this wear and tear, merely to pluck fruit that grows on every bough

at home?' It is a delightful sensation to move a new people; but I have but to go to Paris, and I find the brightest people in the world quite ready for me. I say thus much in a sort of desperate endeavor to explain myself to you. I can put no price upon fifty readings in America, because I do not know that any possible price could pay me for them. And I really cannot say to any one disposed towards the enterprise, 'Tempt me,' because I have too strong a misgiving that he cannot in the nature of things do it.

"This is the plain truth. If any distinct proposal be submitted to me, I will give it a distinct answer. But the chances are a round thousand to one that the answer will be no, and therefore I feel bound to make the declaration beforehand.

". . . . This place has been greatly improved since you were here, and we should be heartily glad if you and she could see it.

"Faithfully yours ever,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

On the 16th of October he writes:—

"Although I perpetually see in the papers that I am coming out with a new serial, I assure you I know no more of it at present. I am *not* writing (except for Christmas number of 'All the Year Round'), and am going to begin, in the middle of January, a series of forty-two readings. Those will probably occupy me until Easter. Early in the summer I hope to get to work upon a story that I have in my mind. But in what form it will appear I do not yet know, because when the time comes I shall have to take many circumstances into consideration. . . .

"A faint outline of a castle in the air always dimly hovers between me and Rochester, in the great hall of which I see myself reading to American audiences. But my domestic surroundings must change before the castle takes tangible

form. And perhaps *I* may change first, and establish a castle in the other world. So no more at present.

“Believe me ever faithfully yours,

“CHARLES DICKENS.”

In June, 1867, things begin to look more promising, and I find in one of his letters, dated the 3d of that month, some good news, as follows : —

“I cannot receive your pleasantest of notes, without assuring you of the interest and gratification that *I* feel on *my* side in our alliance. And now I am going to add a piece of intelligence that I hope may not be disagreeable.

“I am trying hard so to free myself, as to be able to come over to read this next winter! Whether I may succeed in this endeavor or no I cannot yet say, but I am trying HARD. So in the mean time don’t contradict the rumor. In the course of a few mails I hope to be able to give you positive and definite information on the subject.

“My daughter (whom I shall not bring if I come) will answer for herself by and by. Understand that I am really endeavoring tooth and nail to make my way personally to the American public, and that no light obstacles will turn me aside, now that my hand is in.

“My dear Fields, faithfully yours always,

“CHARLES DICKENS.”

This was followed up by another letter, dated the 13th, in which he says : —

“I have this morning resolved to send out to Boston, in the first week in August, Mr. Dolby, the secretary and manager of my readings. He is profoundly versed in the business of those delightful intellectual feasts (!), and will come straight to Ticknor and Fields, and will hold solemn

council with them, and will then go to New York, Philadelphia, Hartford, Washington, etc., etc., and see the rooms for himself, and make his estimates. He will then telegraph to me: 'I see my way to such and such results. Shall I go on?' If I reply, 'Yes,' I shall stand committed to begin reading in America with the month of December. If I reply, 'No,' it will be because I do not clearly see the game to be worth so large a candle. In either case he will come back to me.

"He is the brother of Madame Sainton Dolby, the celebrated singer. I have absolute trust in him and a great regard for him. He goes with me everywhere when I read, and manages for me to perfection.

"We mean to keep all this STRICTLY SECRET, as I beg of you to do, until I finally decide for or against. I am beleaguered by every kind of speculator in such things on your side of the water; and it is very likely that they would take the rooms over our heads, — to charge me heavily for them, — or would set on foot unheard-of devices for buying up the tickets, etc., etc., if the probabilities oozed out. This is exactly how the case stands now, and I confide it to you within a couple of hours after having so far resolved. Dolby quite understands that *he* is to confide in you, similarly, without a particle of reserve.

"Ever faithfully yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

On the 12th of July he says: —

"Our letters will be crossing one another rarely! I have received your cordial answer to my first notion of coming out; but there has not yet been time for me to hear again. . . .

"With kindest regard to 'both your houses,' public and private,

"Ever faithfully yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

He had engaged to write for "Our Young Folks" "A Holiday Romance," and the following note, dated the 25th of July, refers to the story: —

"Your note of the 12th is like a cordial of the best sort. I have taken it accordingly.

"Dolby sails in the Java on Saturday, the 3d of next month, and will come direct to you. You will find him a frank and capital fellow. He is perfectly acquainted with his business and with his chief, and may be trusted without a grain of reserve.

"I hope the Americans will see the joke of 'Holiday Romance.' The writing seems to me so like children's, that dull folks (on *any* side of *any* water) might perhaps rate it accordingly! I should like to be beside you when you read it, and particularly when you read the Pirate's story. It made me laugh to that extent that my people here thought I was out of my wits, until I gave it to them to read, when they did likewise.

"Ever cordially yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

On the 3d of September he breaks out in this wise, Dolby having arrived out and made all arrangements for the readings: —

"Your cheering letter of the 21st of August arrived here this morning. A thousand thanks for it. I begin to think (nautically) that I 'head west'ard.' You shall hear from me fully and finally as soon as Dolby shall have reported personally.

"The other day I received a letter from Mr. — of New York (who came over in the winning yacht, and described the voyage in the Times), saying he would much like to see me. I made an appointment in London, and observed that when he *did* see me he was obviously astonished. While I

was sensible that the magnificence of my appearance would fully account for his being overcome, I nevertheless angled for the cause of his surprise. He then told me that there was a paragraph going round the papers, to the effect that I was 'in a critical state of health.' I asked him if he was sure it was n't 'cricketing' state of health. To which he replied, Quite. I then asked him down here to dinner, and he was again staggered by finding me in sporting training; also much amused.

"Yesterday's and to-day's post bring me this unaccountable paragraph from hosts of uneasy friends, with the enormous and wonderful addition that 'eminent surgeons' are sending me to America for 'cessation from literary labor'!!! So I have written a quiet line to the Times, certifying to my own state of health, and have also begged Dixon to do the like in the Athenæum. I mention the matter to you, in order that you may contradict, from me, if the nonsense should reach America unaccompanied by the truth. But I suppose that the New York Herald will probably have got the latter from Mr. — aforesaid. . . .

"Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins are here; and the joke of the time is to feel my pulse when I appear at table, and also to inveigle innocent messengers to come over to the summer-house, where I write (the place is quite changed since you were here, and a tunnel under the high-road connects this shrubbery with the front garden), to ask, with their compliments, how I find myself *now*.

"If I come to America this next November, even you can hardly imagine with what interest I shall try Copperfield on an American audience, or, if they give me their heart, how freely and fully I shall give them mine. We will ask Dolby then whether he ever heard it before.

"I cannot thank you enough for your invaluable help to Dolby. He writes that at every turn and moment the sense and knowledge and tact of Mr. Osgood are inestimable to him.

"Ever, my dear Fields, faithfully yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

Here is a little note dated the 3d of October : —

"I cannot tell you how much I thank you for your kind little letter, which is like a pleasant voice coming across the Atlantic, with that domestic welcome in it which has no substitute on earth. If you knew how strongly I am inclined to allow myself the pleasure of staying at your house, you would look upon me as a kind of ancient Roman (which, I trust in Heaven, I am not) for having the courage to say no. But if I gave myself that gratification in the beginning, I could scarcely hope to get on in the hard 'reading' life, without offending some kindly disposed and hospitable American friend afterwards; whereas if I observe my English principle on such occasions, of having no abiding-place but an hotel, and stick to it from the first, I may perhaps count on being consistently uncomfortable.

"The nightly exertion necessitates meals at odd hours, silence and rest at impossible times of the day, a general Spartan behavior so utterly inconsistent with my nature, that if you were to give me a happy inch, I should take an ell, and frightfully disappoint you in public. I don't want to do that, if I can help it, and so I will be good in spite of myself.

"Ever your affectionate friend,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

A ridiculous paragraph in the papers following close on the public announcement that Dickens was coming to America in November, drew from him this letter to me, dated also early in October : —

"I hope the telegraph clerks did not mutilate out of recognition or reasonable guess the words I added to Dolby's last telegram to Boston. 'Tribune London correspondent totally false.' Not only is there not a word of truth in the pretended conversation, but it is so absurdly unlike me that I

cannot suppose it to be even invented by any one who ever heard me exchange a word with mortal creature. For twenty years I am perfectly certain that I have never made any other allusion to the republication of my books in America than the good-humored remark, 'that if there had been international copyright between England and the States, I should have been a man of very large fortune, instead of a man of moderate savings, always supporting a very expensive public position.' Nor have I ever been such a fool as to charge the absence of international copyright upon individuals. Nor have I ever been so ungenerous as to disguise or suppress the fact that I have received handsome sums for advance sheets. When I was in the States, I said what I had to say on the question, and there an end. I am absolutely certain that I have never since expressed myself, even with soreness, on the subject. Reverting to the preposterous fabrication of the London correspondent, the statement that I ever talked about 'these fellows' who republished my books, or pretended to know (what I don't know at this instant) who made how much out of them, or ever talked of their sending me 'conscience money,' is as grossly and completely false as the statement that I ever said anything to the effect that I could not be expected to have an interest in the American people. And nothing can by any possibility be falser than that. Again and again in these pages (*All the Year Round*) I have expressed my interest in them. You will see it in the '*Child's History of England*.' You will see it in the last Preface to '*American Notes*.' Every American who has ever spoken with me in London, Paris, or where not, knows whether I have frankly said, 'You could have no better introduction to me than your country.' And for years and years when I have been asked about reading in America, my invariable reply has been, 'I have so many friends there, and constantly receive so many earnest letters from personally unknown readers there, that, but for domestic reasons, I would go to-morrow.' I think I must, in the confidential intercourse

between you and me, have written you to this effect more than once.

"The statement of the London correspondent from beginning to end is false. It is false in the letter and false in the spirit. He may have been misinformed, and the statement may not have originated with him. With whomsoever it originated, it never originated with me, and consequently is false. More than enough about it.

"As I hope to see you so soon, my dear Fields, and as I am busily at work on the Christmas number, I will not make this a longer letter than I can help. I thank you most heartily for your proffered hospitality, and need not tell you that if I went to any friend's house in America, I would go to yours. But the readings are very hard work, and I think I cannot do better than observe the rule on that side of the Atlantic which I observe on this,—of never, under such circumstances, going to a friend's house, but always staying at a hotel. I am able to observe it here, by being consistent and never breaking it. If I am equally consistent there, I can (I hope) offend no one.

"Dolby sends his love to you and all his friends (as I do), and is girding up his loins vigorously.

"Ever, my dear Fields, heartily and affectionately yours,
"CHARLES DICKENS."

Before sailing in November he sent off this note to me from the office of *All the Year Round* :—

"I received your more than acceptable letter yesterday morning, and consequently am able to send you this line of acknowledgment by the next mail. Please God we will have that walk among the autumn leaves, before the readings set in.

"You may have heard from Dolby that a gorgeous repast is to be given to me to-morrow, and that it is expected to be a notable demonstration. I shall try, in what I say, to state my American case exactly. I have a strong hope and

belief that within the compass of a couple of minutes or so I can put it, with perfect truthfulness, in the light that my American friends would be best pleased to see me place it in. Either so, or my instinct is at fault.

"My daughters and their aunt unite with me in kindest loves. As I write, a shrill prolongation of the message comes in from the next room, 'Tell them to take care of you-u-u!'

"Tell Longfellow, with my love, that I am charged by Forster (who has been very ill of diffused gout and bronchitis) with a copy of his *Sir John Eliot*.

"I will bring you out the early proof of the Christmas number. We publish it here on the 12th of December. I am planning it (*No Thoroughfare*) out into a play for Wilkie Collins to manipulate after I sail, and have arranged for Fechter to go to the Adelphi Theatre and play a Swiss in it. It will be brought out the day after Christmas day.

"Here, at Boston Wharf, and everywhere else,

"Yours heartily and affectionately,

"C. D."

On a blustering evening in November, 1867, Dickens arrived in Boston Harbor, on his second visit to America. A few of his friends, under the guidance of the Collector of the port, steamed down in the custom-house boat to welcome him. It was pitch dark before we sighted the *Cuba* and ran alongside. The great steamer stopped for a few minutes to take us on board, and Dickens's cheery voice greeted me before I had time to distinguish him on the deck of the vessel. The news of the excitement the sale of the tickets to his readings had occasioned had been carried to him by the pilot, twenty miles out. He was in capital

spirits over the cheerful account that all was going on so well, and I thought he never looked in better health. The voyage had been a good one, and the ten days' rest on shipboard had strengthened him amazingly he said. As we were told that a crowd had assembled in East Boston, we took him in our little tug and landed him safely at Long Wharf in Boston, where carriages were in waiting. Rooms had been taken for him at the Parker House, and in half an hour after he had reached the hotel he was sitting down to dinner with half a dozen friends, quite prepared, he said, to give the first reading in America that very night, if desirable. Assurances that the kindest feelings towards him existed everywhere put him in great spirits, and he seemed happy to be among us. On Sunday he visited the School Ship and said a few words of encouragement and counsel to the boys. He began his long walks at once, and girded himself up for the hard winter's work before him. Steadily refusing all invitations to go out during the weeks he was reading, he only went into one other house besides the Parker, habitually, during his stay in Boston. Every one who was present remembers the delighted crowds that assembled nightly in the Tremont Temple, and no one who heard Dickens, during that eventful month of December, will forget the sensation produced by the great author, actor, and reader. Hazlitt says of Kean's Othello, "The tone of voice in which he

delivered the beautiful apostrophe 'Then, O, farewell,' struck on the heart like the swelling notes of some divine music, like the sound of years of departed happiness." There were thrills of pathos in Dickens's readings (of David Copperfield, for instance) which Kean himself never surpassed in dramatic effect.

He went from Boston to New York, carrying with him a severe catarrh contracted in our climate. In reality, much of the time during his reading in Boston he was quite ill from the effects of the disease, but he fought courageously against its effects, and always came up, on the night of the reading, all right. Several times I feared he would be obliged to postpone the readings, and I am sure almost any one else would have felt compelled to do so; but he declared no man had a right to break an engagement with the public, if he were able to be out of bed. His spirit was wonderful, and, although he lost all appetite and could partake of very little food, he was always cheerful and ready for his work when the evening came round. Every morning his table was covered with invitations to dinners and all sorts of entertainments, but he said, "I came for hard work, and I must try to fulfil the expectations of the American public." He did accept a dinner which was tendered to him by some of his literary friends in Boston; but the day before it was to come off he was so ill he felt

obliged to ask that the banquet might be given up. The strain upon his strength and nerves was very great during all the months he remained in the country, and only a man of iron will could have accomplished all he did. And here let me say, that although he was accustomed to talk and write a great deal about eating and drinking, I have rarely seen a man eat and drink less. He liked to dilate in imagination over the brewing of a bowl of punch, but I always noticed that when the punch was ready, he drank less of it than any one who might be present. It was the sentiment of the thing and not the thing itself that engaged his attention. He liked to have a little supper every night after a reading, and have three or four friends round the table with him, but he only peeked at the viands as a bird might do, and I scarcely saw him eat a hearty meal during his whole stay in the country. Both at Parker's Hotel in Boston, and at the Westminster in New York, everything was arranged by the proprietors for his comfort and happiness, and tempting dishes to pique his invalid appetite were sent up at different hours of the day, with the hope that he might be induced to try unwonted things and get up again the habit of eating more; but the influenza, that seized him with such masterful power, held the strong man down till he left the country.

One of the first letters I had from him, after he

had begun his reading tour, was dated from the Westminster Hotel in New York, on the 15th of January, 1868.

MY DEAR FIELDS: On coming back from Philadelphia just now (three o'clock) I was welcomed by your cordial letter. It was a delightful welcome and did me a world of good.

The cold remains just as it was (beastly), and where it was (in my head). We have left off referring to the hateful subject, except in emphatic sniffs on my part, convulsive wheezes, and resounding sneezes.

The Philadelphia audience ready and bright. I think they understood the Carol better than Copperfield, but they were bright and responsive as to both. They also highly appreciated your friend Mr. Jack Hopkins. A most excellent hotel there, and everything satisfactory. While on the subject of satisfaction, I know you will be pleased to hear that a long run is confidently expected for the No Thoroughfare drama. Although the piece is well cast and well played, my letters tell me that Fechter is so remarkably fine as to play down the whole company. The Times, in its account of it, said that "Mr. Fechter" (in the Swiss mountain scene, and in the Swiss Hotel) "was practically alone upon the stage." It is splendidly got up, and the Mountain Pass (I planned it with the scene-painter) was loudly cheered by the whole house. Of course I knew that Fechter would tear himself to pieces rather than fall short, but I was not prepared for his contriving to get the pity and sympathy of the audience out of his passionate love for Marguerite.

My dear fellow, you cannot miss me more than I miss you and yours. And Heaven knows how gladly I would substitute Boston for Chicago, Detroit, and Co.! But the tour is fast shaping itself out into its last details, and we must remember that there is a clear fortnight in Boston, not counting the four Farewells. I look forward to that fortnight as a radiant landing-place in the series. . . .

Rash youth ! No presumptuous hand should try to make the punch, except in the presence of the hoary sage who pens these lines. With *him* on the spot to perceive and avert impending failure, with timely words of wisdom to arrest the erring hand and curb the straying judgment, and, with such gentle expressions of encouragement as his stern experience may justify, to cheer the aspirant with faint hopes of future excellence,—with these conditions observed, the daring mind may scale the heights of sugar and contemplate the depths of lemon. Otherwise not.

Dolby is at Washington, and will return in the night. — is on guard. He made a most brilliant appearance before the Philadelphia public, and looked hard at them. The mastery of his eye diverted their attention from his boots: charming in themselves, but (unfortunately) two left ones.

I send my hearty and enduring love. Your kindness to the British Wanderer is deeply inscribed in his heart.

When I think of L——'s story about Dr. Webster, I feel like the lady in *Nickleby* who “has had a sensation of alternate cold and biling water running down her back ever since.”

Ever, my dear Fields, your affectionate friend,

C. D.

His birthday, 7th of February, was spent in Washington, and on the 9th of the month he sent this little note from Baltimore: —

BALTIMORE, Sunday, February 9th, 1868.

MY DEAR FIELDS: I thank you heartily for your pleasant note (I can scarcely tell you *how* pleasant it was to receive the same) and for the beautiful flowers that you sent me on my birthday. For which—and much more—my loving thanks to both.

In consequence of the Washington papers having referred to the august 7th of this month, my room was on that day

a blooming garden. Nor were flowers alone represented there. The silversmith, the goldsmith, the landscape-painter, all sent in their contributions. After the reading was done at night, the whole audience rose; and it was spontaneous, hearty, and affecting.

I was very much surprised by the President's face and manner. It is, in its way, one of the most remarkable faces I have ever seen. Not imaginative, but very powerful in its firmness (or perhaps obstinacy), strength of will, and steadiness of purpose. There is a reticence in it too, curiously at variance with that first unfortunate speech of his. A man not to be turned or trifled with. A man (I should say) who must be killed to be got out of the way. His manners, perfectly composed. We looked at one another pretty hard. There was an air of chronic anxiety upon him. But not a crease or a ruffle in his dress, and his papers were as composed as himself. (Mr. Thornton was going in to deliver his credentials, immediately afterwards.)

This day fortnight will find me, please God, in my "native Boston." I wish I were there to-day.

Ever, my dear Fields, your affectionate friend,

CHARLES DICKENS,
Chairman Missionary Society.

When he returned to Boston in the latter part of the month, after his fatiguing campaign in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, he seemed far from well, and one afternoon sent round from the Parker House to me this little note, explaining why he could not go out on our accustomed walk:—

"I have been terrifying Dolby out of his wits, by setting in for a paroxysm of sneezing, and it would be madness in me, with such a cold, and on such a night, and with to-morrow's reading before me, to go out. I need not add that

I shall be heartily glad to see you if you have time. Many thanks for the Life and Letters of Wilder Dwight. I shall 'save up' that book, to read on the passage home. After turning over the leaves, I have shut it up and put it away; for I am a great reader at sea, and wish to reserve the interest that I find awaiting me in the personal following of the sad war. Good God, when one stands among the hearths that war has broken, what an awful consideration it is that such a tremendous evil *must* be sometimes!

"Ever affectionately yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

I will dispose here of the question often asked me by correspondents, and lately renewed in many epistles, "*Was Charles Dickens a believer in our Saviour's life and teachings?*" Persons addressing to me such inquiries must be profoundly ignorant of the works of the great author, whom they endeavor by implication to place among the "Unbelievers." If anywhere, out of the Bible, God's goodness and mercy are solemnly commended to the world's attention, it is in the pages of Dickens. I had supposed that these written words of his, which have been so extensively copied both in Europe and America, from his last will and testament, dated the 12th of May, 1869, would forever remain an emphatic testimony to his Christian faith: —

"I commit my soul to the mercy of God, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and I exhort my dear chil-

dren humbly to try to guide themselves by the teachings of the New Testament."

I wish it were in my power to bring to the knowledge of all who doubt the Christian character of Charles Dickens certain other memorable words of his, written years ago, with reference to Christmas. They are not as familiar as many beautiful things from the same pen on the same subject, for the paper which enshrines them has not as yet been collected among his authorized works. Listen to these loving words in which the Christian writer has embodied the life of his Saviour: —

"Hark! the Waits are playing, and they break my childish sleep! What images do I associate with the Christmas music as I see them set forth on the Christmas tree? Known before all others, keeping far apart from all the others, they gather round my little bed. An angel, speaking to a group of shepherds in a field; some travellers, with eyes uplifted, following a star; a baby in a manger; a child in a spacious temple, talking with grave men; a solemn figure with a mild and beautiful face, raising a dead girl by the hand; again, near a city gate, calling back the son of a widow, on his bier, to life; a crowd of people looking through the opened roof of a chamber where he sits, and letting down a sick person on a bed, with ropes; the same in a tempest, walking on the water to a ship; again, on a sea-shore, teaching a great multitude; again, with a child upon his knee, and other children round; again, restoring sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, strength to the lame, knowledge to the ignorant; again, dying upon a cross, watched by armed soldiers, a thick darkness coming on, the earth beginning to shake, and only one voice heard, — 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do!' "

The writer of these pages begs to say here, most respectfully and emphatically, that he will not feel himself bound, in future, to reply to any inquiries, from however well-meaning correspondents, as to whether Charles Dickens was an "Unbeliever," or a "Unitarian," or an "Episcopalian," or whether "he ever went to church in his life," or "used improper language," or "drank enough to hurt him." He was human, very human, but he was no scoffer or doubter. His religion was of the heart, and his faith beyond questioning. He taught the world, said Dean Stanley over his new-made grave in Westminster Abbey, great lessons of "the eternal value of generosity, of purity, of kindness, and of unselfishness," and by his fruits he shall be known of all men.

Let me commend to the attention of my numerous nameless correspondents, who have attempted to soil the moral character of Dickens, the following little incident, related to me by himself, during a summer-evening walk among the Kentish meadows, a few months before he died. I will try to tell the story, if possible, as simply and naturally as he told it to me.

"I chanced to be travelling some years ago," he said, "in a railroad carriage between Liverpool and London. Beside myself there were two ladies and a gentleman occupying the carriage. We happened to be all strangers to each other, but I noticed at

once that a clergyman was of the party. I was occupied with a ponderous article in the 'Times,' when the sound of my own name drew my attention to the fact that a conversation was going forward among the three other persons in the carriage with reference to myself and my books. One of the ladies was perusing 'Bleak House,' then lately published, and the clergyman had commenced a conversation with the ladies by asking what book they were reading. On being told the author's name and the title of the book, he expressed himself greatly grieved that any lady in England should be willing to take up the writings of so vile a character as Charles Dickens. Both the ladies showed great surprise at the low estimate the clergyman put upon an author whom they had been accustomed to read, to say the least, with a certain degree of pleasure. They were evidently much shocked at what the man said of the immoral tendency of these books, which they seemed never before to have suspected; but when he attacked the author's private character, and told monstrous stories of his immoralities in every direction, the volume was shut up and consigned to the dark pockets of a travelling-bag. I listened in wonder and astonishment, behind my newspaper, to stories of myself, which if they had been true would have consigned any man to a prison for life. After my fictitious biographer had occupied himself for nearly an hour with the elo-

quent recital of my delinquencies and crimes, I very quietly joined in the conversation. Of course I began by modestly doubting some statements which I had just heard, touching the author of 'Bleak House,' and other unimportant works of a similar character. The man stared at me, and evidently considered my appearance on the conversational stage an intrusion and an impertinence. 'You seem to speak,' I said, 'from personal knowledge of Mr. Dickens. Are you acquainted with him?' He rather evaded the question, but, following him up closely, I compelled him to say that he had been talking, not from his own knowledge of the author in question; but he said he knew for a certainty that every statement he had made was a true one. I then became more earnest in my inquiries for proofs, which he arrogantly declined giving. The ladies sat by in silence, listening intently to what was going forward. An author they had been accustomed to read for amusement had been traduced for the first time in their hearing, and they were waiting to learn what I had to say in refutation of the clergyman's charges. I was taking up his vile stories, one by one, and stamping them as false in every particular, when the man grew furious, and asked me if I knew Dickens personally. I replied, 'Perfectly well; no man knows him better than I do; and all your stories about him from beginning to end, to these ladies, are unmitigated lies.' The

man became livid with rage, and asked for my card. 'You shall have it,' I said, and, coolly taking out one, I presented it to him without bowing. We were just then nearing the station in London, so that I was spared a longer interview with my *truthful* companion; but, if I were to live a hundred years, I should not forget the abject condition into which the narrator of my crimes was instantly plunged. His face turned white as his cravat, and his lips refused to utter words. He seemed like a wilted vegetable, and as if his legs belonged to somebody else. The ladies became aware of the situation at once, and, bidding them 'good day,' I stepped smilingly out of the carriage. Before I could get away from the station the man had mustered up strength sufficient to follow me, and his apologies were so nauseous and craven, that I pitied him from my soul. I left him with this caution, 'Before you make charges against the character of any man again, about whom you know nothing, and of whose works you are utterly ignorant, study to be a seeker after Truth, and avoid Lying as you would eternal perdition.' "

I never ceased to wonder at Dickens's indomitable cheerfulness, even when he was suffering from ill health, and could not sleep more than two or three hours out of the twenty-four. He made it a point never to inflict on another what he might be painfully enduring himself, and I have seen him,

with what must have been a great effort, arrange a merry meeting for some friends, when I knew that almost any one else under similar circumstances would have sought relief in bed.

One evening at a little dinner given by himself to half a dozen friends in Boston, he came out very strong. His influenza lifted a little, as he said afterwards, and he took advantage of the lull. Only his own pen could possibly give an idea of that hilarious night, and I will merely attempt a brief reference to it. As soon as we were seated at the table, I read in his lustrous eye, and heard in his jovial voice, that all solemn forms were to be dispensed with on that occasion, and that merriment might be confidently expected. To the end of the feast there was no let up to his magnificent cheerfulness and humor. J—— B——, ex-minister plenipotentiary as he was, went in for nonsense, and he, I am sure, will not soon forget how undignified we all were, and what screams of laughter went up from his own uncontrollable throat. Among other tomfooleries, we had an imitation of scenes at an English hustings, Dickens bringing on his candidate (his friend D——), and I opposing him with mine (the ex-minister). Of course there was nothing spoken in the speeches worth remembering, but it was Dickens's *manner* that carried off the whole thing. D—— necessarily now wears his hair so widely parted in the middle that only two little capil-

lary seraps are left, just over his ears, to show what kind of thatch once covered his jolly cranium. Dickens pretended that *his* candidate was superior to the other, *because* he had no hair; and that mine, being profusely supplied with that commodity was in consequence disqualified in a marked degree for an election. His speech, for volubility and nonsense, was nearly fatal to us all. We roared and writhed in agonies of laughter, and the candidates themselves were literally choking and crying with the humor of the thing. But the fun culminated when I tried to get a hearing in behalf of my man, and Dickens drowned all my attempts to be heard with imitative jeers of a boisterous election mob. He seemed to have as many voices that night as the human throat is capable of, and the repeated interrupting shouts, among others, of a pretended husky old man bawling out at intervals, "Three cheers for the bald 'un!" "Down with the hairy aristocracy!" "Up with the little shiny chap on top!" and other similar outbursts, I can never forget. At last, in sheer exhaustion, we all gave in, and agreed to break up and thus save our lives, if it were not already too late to make the attempt.

The extent and variety of Dickens's tones were wonderful. Once he described to me in an inimitable way a scene he witnessed many years ago at a London theatre, and I am certain no professional ventriloquist could have reproduced it better. I

could never persuade him to repeat the description in presence of others ; but he did it for me several times during our walks into the country, where he was, of course, unobserved. His recital of the incident was irresistibly droll, and no words of mine can give the *situation* even, as he gave it. He said he was once sitting in the pit of a London theatre, when two men came in and took places directly in front of him. Both were evidently strangers from the country, and not very familiar with the stage. One of them was stone deaf, and relied entirely upon his friend to keep him informed of the dialogue and story of the play as it went on, by having bawled into his ear, word for word, as near as possible what the actors and actresses were saying. The man who could hear became intensely interested in the play, and kept close watch of the stage. The deaf man also shared in the progressive action of the drama, and rated his friend soundly, in a loud voice, if a stitch in the story of the play were inadvertently dropped. Dickens gave the two voices of these two spectators with his best comic and dramatic power. Notwithstanding the roars of the audience, for the scene in the pit grew immensely funny to them as it went on, the deaf man and his friend were too much interested in the main business of the evening to observe that they were noticed. One bawled louder, and the other, with his elevated ear-trumpet, listened more intently

than ever. At length the scene culminated in a most unexpected manner. "Now," screamed the hearing man to the deaf one, "they are going to elope!" "*Who* is going to elope?" asked the deaf man, in a loud, vehement tone. "Why, them two, the young man in the red coat and the girl in a white gown, that's a talking together now, and just going off the stage!" "Well, then, you must have missed telling me something they've said before," roared the other in an enraged and stentorian voice; "for there was nothing in their conduct all the evening, as you have been representing it to me, that would warrant them in such a proceeding!" At which the audience could not bear it any longer, and screamed their delight till the curtain fell.

Dickens was always planning something to interest and amuse his friends, and when in America he taught us several games arranged by himself, which we played again and again, he taking part as our instructor. While he was travelling from point to point, he was cogitating fresh charades to be acted when we should again meet. It was at Baltimore that he first conceived the idea of a walking-match, which should take place on his return to Boston, and he drew up a set of humorous "articles," which he sent to me with this injunction, "Keep them in a place of profound safety, for attested exe-

cution, until my arrival in Boston." He went into this matter of the walking-match with as much earnest directness as if he were planning a new novel. The articles, as prepared by himself, are thus drawn up : —

"Articles of agreement entered into at Baltimore, in the United States of America, this third day of February in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-eight, between — — —, British subject, *alias* the Man of Ross, and — — — —, American citizen, *alias* the Boston Bantam.

"Whereas, some Bounce having arisen between the above men in reference to feats of pedestrianism and agility, they have agreed to settle their differences and prove who is the better man, by means of a walking-match for two hats a side and the glory of their respective countries; and whereas they agree that the said match shall come off, whatsoever the weather, on the Mill Dam Road outside Boston, on Saturday, the 29th day of this present month; and whereas they agree that the personal attendants on themselves during the whole walk, and also the umpires and starters and declarers of victory in the match shall be — — — of Boston, known in sporting circles as Massachusetts Jemmy, and Charles Dickens of Falstaff's Gad's Hill, whose surprising performances (without the least variation) on that truly national instrument, the American catarrh, have won for him the well-merited title of the Gad's Hill Gasper : —

"1. The men are to be started, on the day appointed, by Massachusetts Jemmy and The Gasper.

"2. Jemmy and The Gasper are, on some previous day, to walk out at the rate of not less than four miles an hour by The Gasper's watch, for one hour and a half. At the expiration of that one hour and a half they are to carefully note the place at which they halt. On the match's coming off

they are to station themselves in the middle of the road, at that precise point, and the men keeping clear of them and of each other, are to turn round them, right shoulder inward, and walk back to the starting-point. The man declared by them to pass the starting-point first is to be the victor and the winner of the match.

"3. No jostling or fouling allowed.

"4. All cautions or orders issued to the men by the umpires, starters, and declarers of victory to be considered final and admitting of no appeal.

"A sporting narrative of the match to be written by The Gasper within one week after its coming off, and the same to be duly printed at the expense of the subscribers to these articles on a broadside. The said broadside to be framed and glazed, and one copy of the same to be carefully preserved by each of the subscribers to these articles.

"6. The men to show on the evening of the day of walking at six o'clock precisely, at the Parker House, Boston, when and where a dinner will be given them by The Gasper. The Gasper to occupy the chair, faced by Massachusetts Jemmy. The latter promptly and formally to invite, as soon as may be after the date of these presents, the following guests to honor the said dinner with their presence; that is to say (here follow the names of a few of his friends, whom he wished to be invited).

"Now, lastly. In token of their accepting the trusts and offices by these articles conferred upon them, these articles are solemnly and formally signed by Massachusetts Jemmy and by the Gad's Hill Gasper, as well as by the men themselves.

"Signed by the Man of Ross, otherwise — — —

"Signed by the Boston Bantam, otherwise — — —.

"Signed by Massachusetts Jemmy, otherwise — — —

"Signed by the Gad's Hill Gasper, otherwise Charles Dickens.

"Witness to the signatures, — — —."

When he returned to Boston from Baltimore, he proposed that I should accompany him over the walking-ground "at the rate of not less than four miles an hour, for one hour and a half." I shall not soon forget the tremendous pace at which he travelled that day. I have seen a great many walkers, but never one with whom I found it such hard work to keep up. Of course his object was to stretch out the space as far as possible for our friends to travel on the appointed day. With watch in hand, Dickens strode on over the Mill Dam toward Newton Centre. When we reached the turning-point, and had established the extreme limit, we both felt that we had given the men who were to walk in the match excellent good measure. All along the road people had stared at us, wondering, I suppose, why two men on such a blustering day should be pegging away in the middle of the road as if life depended on the speed they were getting over the ground. We had walked together many a mile before this, but never at such a rate as on this day. I had never seen his full power tested before, and I could not but feel great admiration for his walking pluck. We were both greatly heated, and, seeing a little shop by the roadside, we went in for refreshments. A few sickly looking oranges were all we could obtain to quench our thirst, and we seized those and sat down on the shop door-steps, tired and panting. After a few minutes' rest we started

again and walked back to town. Thirteen miles' stretch on a brisk winter day did neither of us any harm, and Dickens was in great spirits over the match that was so soon to come off. We agreed to walk over the ground again on the appointed day, keeping company with our respective men. Here is the account that Dickens himself drew up, of that day's achievement, for the broadside.

"THE SPORTING NARRATIVE.

"THE MEN.

"The Boston Bantam (*alias* Bright Chanticleer) is a young bird, though too old to be caught with chaff. He comes of a thorough game breed, and has a clear though modest crow. He pulls down the scale at ten stone and a half and add a pound or two. His previous performances in the pedestrian line have not been numerous. He once achieved a neat little match against time in two left boots at Philadelphia; but this must be considered as a pedestrian eccentricity, and cannot be accepted by the rigid chronicler as high art. The old mower with the scythe and hour-glass has not yet laid his mauley heavily on the Bantam's frontispiece, but he has had a grip at the Bantam's top feathers, and in plucking out a handful was very near making him like the great Napoleon Bonaparte (with the exception of the victualling department), when the ancient one found himself too much occupied to carry out the idea, and gave it up. The Man of Ross (*alias* old Alick Pope, *alias* Allourpraiseswhy-shouldlords, etc.) is a thought and a half too fleshy, and, if he accidentally sat down upon his baby, would do it to the tune of fourteen stone. This popular codger is of the rubicund and jovial sort, and has long been known as a piscatorial pedestrian on the banks of the Wye. But Izaak Walton had n't pace, — look at his book and you'll find it

slow, — and when that article comes in question, the fishing-rod may prove to some of his disciples a rod in pickle. Howbeit, the Man of Ross is a lively ambler, and has a smart stride of his own.

“THE TRAINING.

“If vigorous attention to diet could have brought both men up to the post in tiptop feather, their condition would have left nothing to be desired. But both might have had more daily practice in the poetry of motion. Their breathings were confined to an occasional Baltimore burst under the guidance of The Gasper, and to an amicable toddle between themselves at Washington.

“THE COURSE.

“Six miles and a half, good measure, from the first tree on the Mill Dam Road, lies the little village (with no refreshments in it but five oranges and a bottle of blacking) of Newton Centre. Here Massachusetts Jemmy and The Gasper had established the turning-point. The road comprehended every variety of inconvenience to test the mettle of the men, and nearly the whole of it was covered with snow.

“THE START

was effected beautifully. The men taking their stand in exact line at the starting-post, the first tree aforesaid, received from The Gasper the warning, “Are you ready?” and then the signal, “One, two, three. Go!” They got away exactly together, and at a spinning speed, waited on by Massachusetts Jemmy and The Gasper.

“THE RACE.

“In the teeth of an intensely cold and bitter wind, before which the snow flew fast and furious across the road from right to left, the Bantam slightly led. But the Man responded to the challenge, and soon breasted him. For the

first three miles each led by a yard or so alternately ; but the walking was very even. On four miles being called by The Gasper the men were side by side ; and then ensued one of the best periods of the race, the same splitting pace being held by both through a heavy snow-wreath and up a dragging hill. At this point it was anybody's game, a dollar on Rossius and two half-dollars on the member of the feathery tribe. When five miles were called, the men were still shoulder to shoulder. At about six miles The Gasper put on a tremendous spurt to leave the men behind and establish himself at the turning-point at the entrance of the village. He afterwards declared that he received a mental knock-downer on taking his station and facing about, to find Bright Chanticleer close in upon him, and Rossius steaming up like a locomotive. The Bantam rounded first ; Rossius rounded wide ; and from that moment the Bantam steadily shot ahead. Though both were breathed at the town, the Bantam quickly got his bellows into obedient condition, and blew away like an orderly blacksmith in full work. The forcing-pumps of Rossius likewise proved themselves tough and true, and warranted first-rate, but he fell off in pace ; whereas the Bantam pegged away with his little drumsticks, as if he saw his wives and a peck of barley waiting for him at the family perch. Continually gaining upon him of Ross, Chanticleer gradually drew ahead within a very few yards of half a mile, finally doing the whole distance in two hours and forty-eight minutes. Ross had ceased to compete three miles short of the winning-post, but bravely walked it out and came in seven minutes later.

“REMARKS.

“The difficulties under which this plucky match was walked can only be appreciated by those who were on the ground. To the excessive rigor of the icy blast and the depth and state of the snow must be added the constant scattering of the latter into the air and into the eyes of the men, while heads of hair, beards, eyelashes, and eye-

brows were frozen into icicles. To breathe at all, in such a rarefied and disturbed atmosphere, was not easy; but to breathe up to the required mark was genuine, slogging, ding-dong, hard labor. That both competitors were game to the backbone, doing what they did under such conditions, was evident to all; but to his gameness the courageous Bantam added unexpected endurance and (like the sailor's watch that did three hours to the cathedral clock's one) unexpected powers of going when wound up. The knowing eye could not fail to detect considerable disparity between the lads; Chanticleer being, as Mrs. Cratchit said of Tiny Tim, "very light to carry," and Rossius promising fair to attain the rotundity of the Anonymous Cove in the Epigram: —

‘And when he walks the streets the paviers cry,
“God bless you, sir!” — and lay their rammers by.’ ”

The dinner at the Parker House, after the fatigues of the day, was a brilliant success. The Great International Walking-Match was over; America had won, and England was nowhere. The victor and the vanquished were the heroes of the occasion, for both had shown great powers of endurance and done their work in capital time. We had no set speeches at the table, for we had voted eloquence a bore before we sat down. David Copperfield, Hyperion, Hosea Biglow, the Autocrat, and the Bad Boy were present, and there was no need of set speeches. The ladies present, being all daughters of America, smiled upon the champion, and we had a great, good time. The banquet provided by Dickens was profusely decorated with flowers, arranged by himself. The master of the

feast was in his best mood, albeit his country had lost ; and we all declared, when we bade him good night, that none of us had ever enjoyed a festival more.

Soon after this Dickens started on his reading travels again, and I received from him frequent letters from various parts of the country. On the 8th of March, 1868, he writes from a Western city : —

Sunday, 8th March, 1868.

MY DEAR FIELDS: We came here yesterday most comfortably in a "drawing-room car," of which (Rule Britannia!) we bought exclusive possession. — is rather a depressing feather in the eagle's wing, when considered on a Sunday and in a thaw. Its hotel is likewise a dreary institution. But I have an impression that we must be in the wrong one, and buoy myself up with a devout belief in the other, over the way. The awakening to consciousness this morning on a lop-sided bedstead facing nowhere, in a room holding nothing but sour dust, was more terrible than the being afraid to go to bed last night. To keep ourselves up we played whist (double dummy) until neither of us could bear to speak to the other any more. We had previously supped on a tough old nightmare named buffalo.

What do you think of a "Fowl de poulet"? or a "Paettie de Shay"? or "Celary"? or "Murange with cream"? Because all these delicacies are in the printed bill of fare! If Mrs. Fields would like the recipe, how to make a "Paettie de Shay," telegraph instantly, and the recipe shall be purchased. We asked the Irish waiter what this dish was, and he said it was "the Frinch name the steward giv' to oyster pattie." It is usually washed down, I believe, with "Movseaux," or "Table Madeira," or "Abasinthe," or

“Curraco,” all of which drinks are on the wine list. I mean to drink my love to — after dinner in Mowseaux. Your rugged nature shall be pledged in Abasinthe.

Ever affectionately,

CHARLES DICKENS.

On the 19th of March he writes from Albany : —

ALBANY, 19th March, 1868.

MY DEAR —: I should have answered your kind and welcome note before now, but that we have been in difficulties. After creeping through water for miles upon miles, our train gave it up as a bad job between Rochester and this place, and stranded us, early on Tuesday afternoon, at Utica. There we remained all night, and at six o'clock yesterday morning were ordered up to get ready for starting again. Then we were countermanded. Then we were once more told to get ready. Then we were told to stay where we were. At last we got off at eight o'clock, and after paddling through the flood until half past three, got landed here, — to the great relief of our minds as well as bodies, for the tickets were all sold out for last night. We had all sorts of adventures by the way, among which two of the most notable were : —

1. Picking up two trains out of the water, in which the passengers had been composedly sitting all night, until relief should arrive.

2. Unpacking and releasing into the open country a great train of cattle and sheep that had been in the water I don't know how long, and that had begun in their imprisonment to eat each other. I never could have realized the strong and dismal expressions of which the faces of sheep are capable, had I not seen the haggard countenances of this unfortunate flock as they were tumbled out of their dens and picked themselves up and made off, leaping wildly (many with broken legs) over a great mound of thawing snow, and over the worried body of a deceased companion.

Their misery was so very human that I was sorry to recognize several intimate acquaintances conducting themselves in this forlornly gymnastic manner.

As there is no question that our friendship began in some previous state of existence many years ago, I am now going to make bold to mention a discovery we have made concerning Springfield. We find that by remaining there next Saturday and Sunday, instead of coming on to Boston, we shall save several hours' travel, and much wear and tear of our baggage and camp-followers. Ticknor reports the Springfield hotel excellent. Now will you and Fields come and pass Sunday with us there? It will be delightful, if you can. If you cannot, will you defer our Boston dinner until the following Sunday? Send me a hopeful word to Springfield (Massasoit House) in reply, please.

Lowell's delightful note enclosed with thanks. *Do* make a trial for Springfield. We saw Professor White at Syracuse, and went out for a ride with him. Queer quarters at Utica, and nothing particular to eat; but the people so very anxious to please, that it was better than the best cuisine. I made a jug of punch (in the bedroom pitcher), and we drank our love to you and Fields. Dolby had more than his share, under pretence of devoted enthusiasm.

Ever affectionately yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

His readings everywhere were crowned with enthusiastic success, and if his strength had been equal to his will, he could have stayed in America another year, and occupied every night of it with his wonderful impersonations. I regretted extremely that he felt obliged to give up visiting the West. Invitations which greatly pleased him came day after day from the principal cities and towns, but his friends soon discovered that his health

would not allow him to extend his travels beyond Washington.

He sailed for home on the 19th of April, 1868, and we shook hands with him on the deck of the *Russia* as the good ship turned her prow toward England. He was in great spirits at the thought of so soon again seeing Gad's Hill, and the prospect of a rest after all his toilsome days and nights in America. While at sea he wrote the following letter to me : —

ABOARD THE *RUSSIA*, BOUND FOR LIVERPOOL,
Sunday, 26th April, 1868.

MY DEAR FIELDS: In order that you may have the earliest intelligence of me, I begin this note to-day in my small cabin, purposing (if it should prove practicable) to post it at Queenstown for the return steamer.

We are already past the Banks of Newfoundland, although our course was seventy miles to the south, with the view of avoiding ice seen by Judkins in the *Scotia* on his passage out to New York. The *Russia* is a magnificent ship, and has dashed along bravely. We had made more than thirteen hundred and odd miles at noon to-day. The wind, after being a little capricious, rather threatens at the present time to turn against us, but our run is already eighty miles ahead of the *Russia's* last run in this direction, — a very fast one. . . . To all whom it may concern, report the *Russia* in the highest terms. She rolls more easily than the other Cunard Screws, is kept in perfect order, and is most carefully looked after in all departments. We have had nothing approaching to heavy weather; still, one can speak to the trim of the ship. Her captain, a gentleman; bright, polite, good-natured, and vigilant. . . .

As to me, I am greatly better, I hope. I have got on my

right boot to-day for the first time ; the "true American" seems to be turning faithless at last ; and I made a Gad's Hill breakfast this morning, as a further advance on having otherwise eaten and drunk all day ever since Wednesday.

You will see Anthony Trollope, I dare say. What was my amazement to see him with these eyes come aboard in the mail tender just before we started ! He had come out in the Scotia just in time to dash off again in said tender to shake hands with me, knowing me to be aboard here. It was most heartily done. He is on a special mission of convention with the United States post-office.

We have been picturing your movements, and have duly checked off your journey home, and have talked about you continually. But I have thought about you both, even much, much more. You will never know how I love you both ; or what you have been to me in America, and will always be to me everywhere ; or how fervently I thank you.

All the working of the ship seems to be done on my forehead. It is scrubbed and holystoned (my head — not the deck) at three every morning. It is scraped and swabbed all day. Eight pairs of heavy boots are now clattering on it, getting the ship under sail again. Legions of ropes'-ends are flopped upon it as I write, and I must leave off with Dolby's love.

Thursday, 30th.

Soon after I left off as above we had a gale of wind, which blew all night. For a few hours on the evening side of midnight there was no getting from this cabin of mine to the saloon, or *vice versa*, so heavily did the sea break over the decks. The ship, however, made nothing of it, and we were all right again by Monday afternoon. Except for a few hours yesterday (when we had a very light head wind), the weather has been constantly favorable, and we are now howling away at a great rate, with a fresh breeze filling all our sails. We expect to be at Queenstown between midnight and three in the morning.

I hope, my dear Fields, you may find this legible, but I

rather doubt it; for there is motion enough on the ship to render writing to a landsman, however accustomed to pen and ink, rather a difficult achievement. Besides which, I slide away gracefully from the paper, whenever I want to be particularly expressive. . . .

—, sitting opposite to me at breakfast, always has the following items: A large dish of porridge, into which he casts slices of butter and a quantity of sugar. Two cups of tea. A steak. Irish stew. Chutnee, and marmalade. Another deputation of two has solicited a reading to-night. Illustrious novelist has unconditionally and absolutely declined.

More love, and more to that, from your ever affectionate friend,

C. D.

His first letter from home gave us all great pleasure, for it announced his complete recovery from the severe influenza that had fastened itself upon him so many months before. Among his earliest notes I find these paragraphs: —

“I have found it so extremely difficult to write about America (though never so briefly) without appearing to blow trumpets on the one hand, or to be inconsistent with my avowed determination *not* to write about it on the other, that I have taken the simple course enclosed. The number will be published on the 6th of June. It appears to me to be the most modest and manly course, and to derive some graceful significance from its title. . . .

“Thank my dear — for me for her delightful letter received on the 16th. I will write to her very soon, and tell her about the dogs. I would write by this post, but that Wills’s absence (in Sussex, and getting no better there as yet) so overwhelms me with business that I can scarcely get through it.

“Miss me? Ah, my dear fellow, but how do I miss *you*!

We talk about you both at Gad's Hill every day of our lives. And I never see the place looking very pretty indeed, or hear the birds sing all day long and the nightingales all night, without restlessly wishing that you were both there.

"With best love, and truest and most enduring regard, ever, my dear Fields,

"Your most affectionate,

"C. D."

" . . . I hope you will receive by Saturday's Cunard a case containing :

"1. A trifling supply of the pen-knibs that suited your hand.

"2. A do. of unfailing medicine for cockroaches.

"3. Mrs. Gamp, for —.

"The case is addressed to you at Bleecker Street, New York. If it should be delayed for the knibs (or nibs) promised to-morrow, and should be too late for the Cunard packet, it will in that case come by the next following human steamer.

"Everything here looks lovely, and I find it (you will be surprised to hear) really a pretty place! I have seen No Thoroughfare twice. Excellent things in it; but it drags, to my thinking. It is, however, a great success in the country, and is now getting up with great force in Paris. Fechter is ill, and was ordered off to Brighton yesterday. Wills is ill too, and banished into Sussex for perfect rest. Otherwise, thank God, I find everything well and thriving. You and my dear Mrs. F—— are constantly in my mind. Procter greatly better. . . ."

On the 25th of May he sent off the following from Gad's Hill : —

MY DEAR — : As you ask me about the dogs, I begin with them. When I came down first, I came to Gravesend, five miles off. The two Newfoundland dogs coming to meet me, with the usual carriage and the usual driver, and beholding me coming in my usual dress out at the usual door,

it struck me that their recollection of my having been absent for any unusual time was at once cancelled. They behaved (they are both young dogs) exactly in their usual manner; coming behind the basket phaeton as we trotted along, and lifting their heads to have their ears pulled, — a special attention which they receive from no one else. But when I drove into the stable-yard, Linda (the St. Bernard) was greatly excited; weeping profusely, and throwing herself on her back that she might caress my foot with her great fore-paws. M——’s little dog too, Mrs. Bouncer, barked in the greatest agitation on being called down and asked my M——, “Who is this?” and tore round and round me, like the dog in the Faust outlines. You must know that all the farmers turned out on the road in their market-chaises to say, “Welcome home, sir!” that all the houses along the road were dressed with flags; and that our servants, to cut out the rest, had dressed this house so that every brick of it was hidden. They had asked M——’s permission to “ring the alarm-bell (!) when master drove up”; but M——, having some slight idea that that compliment might awaken master’s sense of the ludicrous, had recommended bell abstinence. But on Sunday, the village choir (which includes the bell-ringers) made amends. After some unusually brief pious reflection in the crowns of their hats at the end of the sermon, the ringers bolted out and rang like mad until I got home. (There had been a conspiracy among the villagers to take the horse out, if I had come to our own station, and draw me here. M—— and G—— had got wind of it and warned me.)

Divers birds sing here all day, and the nightingales all night. The place is lovely, and in perfect order. I have put five mirrors in the Swiss chalet (where I write) and they reflect and refract in all kinds of ways the leaves that are quivering at the windows, and the great fields of waving corn, and the sail-dotted river. My room is up among the branches of the trees; and the birds and the butterflies fly in and out, and the green branches shoot in, at the open

windows, and the lights and shadows of the clouds come and go with the rest of the company. The scent of the flowers, and indeed of everything that is growing for miles and miles, is most delicious.

Dolby (who sends a world of messages) found his wife much better than he expected, and the children (wonderful to relate!) perfect. The little girl winds up her prayers every night with a special commendation to Heaven of me and the pony, — as if I must mount him to get there! I dine with Dolby (I was going to write “him,” but found it would look as if I were going to dine with the pony) at Greenwich this very day, and if your ears do not burn from six to nine this evening, then the Atlantic is a non-conductor. We are already settling — think of this! — the details of my farewell course of readings. I am brown beyond relief, and cause the greatest disappointment in all quarters by looking so well. It is really wonderful what those fine days at sea did for me! My doctor was quite broken down in spirits when he saw me, for the first time since my return, last Saturday. “Good Lord!” he said, recoiling, “seven years younger!”

It is time I should explain the otherwise inexplicable enclosure. Will you tell Fields, with my love, (I suppose he has n’t used *all* the pens yet?) that I think there is in Tremont Street a set of my books, sent out by Chapman, not arrived when I departed. Such set of the immortal works of our illustrious, etc., is designed for the gentleman to whom the enclosure is addressed. If T., F., & Co. will kindly forward the set (carriage paid) with the enclosure to —’s address, I will invoke new blessings on their heads, and will get Dolby’s little daughter to mention them nightly.

“No Thoroughfare” is very shortly coming out in Paris, where it is now in active rehearsal. It is still playing here, but without Fechter, who has been very ill. The doctor’s dismissal of him to Paris, however, and his getting better there, enables him to get up the play there. He and Wilkie

missed so many pieces of stage effect here, that, unless I am quite satisfied with his report, I shall go over and try my stage-managerial hand at the Vaudeville Theatre. I particularly want the drugging and attempted robbing in the bedroom scene at the Swiss inn to be done to the sound of a waterfall rising and falling with the wind. Although in the very opening of that scene they speak of the waterfall and listen to it, nobody thought of its mysterious music. I could make it, with a good stage carpenter, in an hour. Is it not a curious thing that they want to make me a governor of the Foundling Hospital, because, since the Christmas number, they have had such an amazing access of visitors and money?

My dear love to Fields once again. Same to you and him from M—— and G——. I cannot tell you both how I miss you, or how overjoyed I should be to see you here.

Ever, my dear ——, your most affectionate friend,

C. D.

Excellent accounts of his health and spirits continued to come from Gad's Hill, and his letters were full of plans for the future. On the 7th of July he writes from Gad's Hill as usual: —

GAD'S HILL PLACE, Tuesday, 7th July, 1868.

MY DEAR FIELDS: I have delayed writing to you (and ——, to whom my love) until I should have seen Longfellow. When he was in London the first time he came and went without reporting himself, and left me in a state of unspeakable discomfiture. Indeed, I should not have believed in his having been here at all, if Mrs. Procter had not told me of his calling to see Procter. However, on his return he wrote to me from the Langham Hotel, and I went up to town to see him, and to make an appointment for his coming here. He, the girls, and —— came down last Saturday night, and stayed until Monday forenoon. I showed them all the neighboring country that could be shown in so short

a time, and they finished off with a tour of inspection of the kitchens, pantry, wine-cellar, pickles, sanecs, servants' sitting-room, general household stores, and even the Cellar Book, of this illustrious establishment. Forster and Kent (the latter wrote certain verses to Longfellow, which have been published in the "Times," and which I sent to D——) came down for a day, and I hope we all had a really "good time." I turned out a couple of postilions in the old red jacket of the old red royal Dover road, for our ride; and it was like a holiday ride in England fifty years ago. Of course we went to look at the old houses in Rochester, and the old cathedral, and the old castle, and the house for the six poor travellers who, "not being rogues or proctors, shall have lodging, entertainment, and four pence each."

Nothing can surpass the respect paid to Longfellow here, from the Queen downward. He is everywhere received and courted, and finds (as I told him he would, when we talked of it in Boston) the workingmen at least as well acquainted with his books as the classes socially above them. . . .

Last Thursday I attended, as sponsor, the christening of Dolby's son and heir,—a most jolly baby, who held on tight by the rector's left whisker while the service was performed. What time, too, his little sister, connecting me with the pony, trotted up and down the centre aisle, noisily driving herself as that celebrated animal, so that it went very hard with the sponsorial dignity.

— is not yet recovered from that concussion of the brain, and I have all his work to do. This may account for my not being able to devise a Christmas number, but I seem to have left my invention in America. In case you should find it, please send it over. I am going up to town to-day to dine with Longfellow. And now, my dear Fields, you know all about me and mine.

You are enjoying your holiday? and are still thinking sometimes of our Boston days, as I do? and are maturing schemes for coming here next summer? A satisfactory reply to the last question is particularly entreated.

I am delighted to find you both so well pleased with the Blind Book scheme. I said nothing of it to you when we were together, though I had made up my mind, because I wanted to come upon you with that little burst from a distance. It seemed something like meeting again when I remitted the money and thought of your talking of it.

The dryness of the weather is amazing. All the ponds and surface wells about here are waterless, and the poor people suffer greatly. The people of this village have only one spring to resort to, and it is a couple of miles from many cottages. I do not let the great dogs swim in the canal, because the people have to drink of it. But when they get into the Medway, it is hard to get them out again. The other day Bumble (the son, Newfoundland dog) got into difficulties among some floating timber, and became frightened. Don (the father) was standing by me, shaking off the wet and looking on carelessly, when all of a sudden he perceived something amiss, and went in with a bound and brought Bumble out by the ear. The scientific way in which he towed him along was charming.

Ever your loving

C. D.

During the summer of 1868 constant messages and letters came from Dickens across the seas, containing pleasant references to his visit in America, and giving charming accounts of his way of life at home. Here is a letter announcing the fact that he had decided to close forever his appearance in the reading-desk : —

LIVERPOOL, Friday, October 30, 1868.

MY DEAR —: I ought to have written to you long ago. But I have begun my one hundred and third Farewell Readings, and have been so busy and so fatigued that my hands have been quite full. Here are Dolby and I again leading the

kind of life that you know so well. We stop next week (except in London) for the month of November, on account of the elections, and then go on again, with a short holiday at Christmas. We have been doing wonders, and the crowds that pour in upon us in London are beyond all precedent or means of providing for. I have serious thoughts of doing the murder from *Oliver Twist*; but it is so horrible, that I am going to try it on a dozen people in my London hall one night next month, privately, and see what effect it makes.

My reason for abandoning the Christmas number was, that I became weary of having my own writing swamped by that of other people. This reminds me of the Ghost story. I don't think so well of it, my dear Fields, as you do. It seems to me to be too obviously founded on Bill Jones (in Monk Lewis's *Tales of Terror*), and there is also a remembrance in it of another Sea-Ghost story entitled, I think, "*Stand from Under*," and written by I don't know whom. *Stand from under* is the cry from aloft when anything is going to be sent down on deck, and the ghost is aloft on a yard. . . .

You know all about public affairs, Irish churches, and party squabbles. A vast amount of electioneering is going on about here; but it has not hurt us; though Gladstone has been making speeches, north, east, south, and west of us. I hear that C—— is on his way here in the *Russia*. Gad's Hill must be thrown open. . . .

Your most affectionate

CHARLES DICKENS.

We had often talked together of the addition to his *répertoire* of some scenes from "*Oliver Twist*," and the following letter explains itself:—

GLASGOW, Wednesday, December 16, 1868.

MY DEAR —: And first, as you are curious about the Oliver murder, I will tell you about that trial of the same at which you *ought* to have assisted. There were

about a hundred people present in all. I have changed my stage. Besides that back screen which you know so well, there are two large screens of the same color, set off, one on either side, like the "wings" at a theatre. And besides those again, we have a quantity of curtains of the same color, with which to close in any width of room from wall to wall. Consequently, the figure is now completely isolated, and the slightest action becomes much more important. This was used for the first time on the occasion. But behind the stage — the orchestra being very large and built for the accommodation of a numerous chorus — there was ready, on the level of the platform, a very long table, beautifully lighted, with a large staff of men ready to open oysters and set champagne corks flying. Directly I had done, the screens being whisked off by my people, there was disclosed one of the prettiest banquets you can imagine; and when all the people came up, and the gay dresses of the ladies were lighted by those powerful lights of mine, the scene was exquisitely pretty; the hall being newly decorated, and very elegantly; and the whole looking like a great bed of flowers and diamonds.

Now, you must know that all this company were, before the wine went round, unmistakably pale, and had horror-stricken faces. Next morning, Harness (Fields knows — Rev. William — did an edition of Shakespeare — old friend of the Kembles and Mrs. Siddons), writing to me about it, and saying it was "a most amazing and terrific thing," added, "but I am bound to tell you that I had an almost irresistible impulse upon me to *scream*, and that, if any one had cried out, I am certain I should have followed." He had no idea that on the night P——, the great ladies' doctor, had taken me aside and said, "My dear Dickens, you may rely upon it that if only one woman cries out when you murder the girl, there will be a contagion of hysteria all over this place." It is impossible to soften it without spoiling it, and you may suppose that I am rather anxious to discover how it goes on the 5th of January!!! We are

afraid to announce it elsewhere, without knowing, except that I have thought it pretty safe to put it up once in Dublin. I asked Mrs. K——, the famous actress, who was at the experiment: "What do *you* say? Do it, or not?" "Why, of course, do it," she replied. "Having got at such an effect as that, it must be done. But," rolling her large black eyes very slowly, and speaking very distinctly, "the public have been looking out for a sensation these last fifty years or so, and by Heaven they have got it!" With which words, and a long breath and a long stare, she became speechless. Again, you may suppose that I am a little anxious! I had previously tried it, merely sitting over the fire in a chair, upon two ladies separately, one of whom was G——. They had both said, "O, good gracious! if you are going to do *that*, it ought to be seen; but it's awful." So once again you may suppose I am a little anxious!

Not a day passes but Dolby and I talk about you both, and recall where we were at the corresponding time of last year. My old likening of Boston to Edinburgh has been constantly revived within these last ten days. There is a certain remarkable similarity of *tone* between the two places. The audiences are curiously alike, except that the Edinburgh audience has a quicker sense of humor and is a little more genial. No disparagement to Boston in this, because I consider an Edinburgh audience perfect.

I trust, my dear Eugenius, that you have recognized yourself in a certain Uncommercial, and also some small reference to a name rather dear to you? As an instance of how strangely something comic springs up in the midst of the direst misery, look to a succeeding Uncommercial, called "A Small Star in the East," published to-day, by the by. I have described, *with exactness*, the poor places into which I went, and how the people behaved, and what they said. I was wretched, looking on; and yet the boiler-maker and the poor man with the legs filled me with a sense of drollery not to be kept down by any pressure.

The atmosphere of this place, compounded of mists from the highlands and smoke from the town factories, is crushing my eyebrows as I write, and it rains as it never does rain anywhere else, and always does rain here. It is a dreadful place, though much improved and possessing a deal of public spirit. Improvement is beginning to knock the old town of Edinburgh about, here and there; but the Canongate and the most picturesque of the horrible courts and wynds are not to be easily spoiled, or made fit for the poor wretches who people them to live in. Edinburgh is so changed as to its notabilities, that I had the only three men left of the Wilson and Jeffrey time to dine with me there, last Saturday.

I read here to-night and to-morrow, go back to Edinburgh on Friday morning, read there on Saturday morning, and start southward by the mail that same night. After the great experiment of the 5th, — that is to say, on the morning of the 6th, — we are off to Belfast and Dublin. On every alternate Tuesday I am due in London, from wheresoever I may be, to read at St. James's Hall.

I think you will find "Fatal Zero" (by Percy Fitzgerald) a very curious analysis of a mind, as the story advances. A new beginner in A. Y. R. (Hon. Mrs. Clifford, Kinglake's sister), who wrote a story in the series just finished, called "The Abbot's Pool," has just sent me another story. I have a strong impression that, with care, she will step into Mrs. Gaskell's vacant place. W—— is no better, and I have work enough even in that direction.

God bless the woman with the black mittens, for making me laugh so this morning! I take her to be a kind of public-spirited Mrs. Sparsit, and as such take her to my bosom. God bless you both, my dear friends, in this Christmas and New Year time, and in all times, seasons, and places, and send you to Gad's Hill with the next flowers!

Ever your most affectionate

C. D.

All who witnessed the reading of Dickens in the "Oliver Twist" murder scene unite in testifying to the wonderful effect he produced in it. Old theatrical *habitués* have told me that, since the days of Edmund Kean and Cooper, no mimetic representation had been superior to it. I became so much interested in all I heard about it, that I resolved early in the year 1869 to step across the water (it is only a stride of three thousand miles) and see it done. The following is Dickens's reply to my announcement of the intended voyage:—

A. Y. R. OFFICE, LONDON,

Monday, February 15, 1869.

MY DEAR FIELDS: Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah! It is a remarkable instance of magnetic sympathy that before I received your joyfully welcomed announcement of your probable visit to England, I was waiting for the enclosed card to be printed, that I might send you a clear statement of my Readings. I felt almost convinced that you would arrive before the Farewells were over. What do you say to *that*?

The final course of Four Readings in a week, mentioned in the enclosed card, is arranged to come off, on

Monday, June 7th;

Tuesday, June 8th;

Thursday, June 10th; and

Friday, June 11th: last night of all.

We hoped to have finished in May, but cannot clear the country off in sufficient time. I shall probably be about the Lancashire towns in that month. There are to be three morning murders in London not yet announced, but they will be extra the London nights I send you, and will in no wise interfere with them. We are doing most amazingly.

In the country the people usually collapse with the murder, and don't fully revive in time for the final piece; in London, where they are much quicker, they are equal to both. It is very hard work; but I have never for a moment lost voice or been unwell; except that my foot occasionally gives me a twinge. We shall have in London on the 2d of March, for the second murder night, probably the greatest assemblage of notabilities of all sorts ever packed together. D—— continues steady in his allegiance to the Stars and Stripes, sends his kindest regard, and is immensely excited by the prospect of seeing you. Gad's Hill is all ablaze on the subject. We are having such wonderfully warm weather that I fear we shall have a backward spring there. You'll excuse east-winds, won't you, if they shake the flowers roughly when you first set foot on the lawn? I have only seen it once since Christmas, and that was from last Saturday to Monday, when I went there for my birthday, and had the Forsters and Wilkie to keep it. I had had ——'s letter four days before, and drank to you both most heartily and lovingly.

I was with M—— a week or two ago. He is quite surprisingly infirm and aged. Could not possibly get on without his second wife to take care of him, which she does to perfection. I went to Cheltenham expressly to do the murder for him, and we put him in the front row, where he sat grimly staring at me. After it was over, he thus delivered himself, on my laughing it off and giving him some wine: "No, Dickens — er — er — I will NOT," with sudden emphasis, — "er — have it — er — put aside. In my — er — best times — er — you remember them, my dear boy — er — gone, gone! — no," — with great emphasis again, — "it comes to this — er — TWO MACBETHS!" with extraordinary energy. After which he stood (with his glass in his hand and his old square jaw of its old fierce form) looking defiantly at Dolby as if Dolby had contradicted him; and then trailed off into a weak pale likeness of himself as if his whole appearance had been some clever optical illusion.

I am away to Scotland on Wednesday next, the 17th, to finish there. Ireland is already disposed of, and Manchester and Liverpool will follow within six weeks. "Like lights in a theatre, they are being snuffed out fast," as Carlyle says of the guillotined in his Revolution. I suppose I shall be glad when they are all snuffed out. Anyhow, I think so *now*.

The N——s have a very pretty house at Kensington. He has quite recovered, and is positively getting fat. I dined with them last Friday at F——'s, having (marvellous to relate!) a spare day in London. The warm weather has greatly spared F——'s bronchitis; but I fear that he is quite unable to bear cold, or even changes of temperature, and that he will suffer exceedingly if east-winds obtain. One would say they must at last, for it has been blowing a tempest from the south and southwest for weeks and weeks.

The safe arrival of my boy's ship in Australia has been telegraphed home, but I have not yet heard from him. His post will be due a week or so hence in London. My next boy is doing very well, I hope, at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Of my seafaring boy's luck in getting a death-vacancy of First Lieutenant, aboard a new ship-of-war on the South American Station, I heard from a friend, a captain in the Navy, when I was at Bath the other day; though we have not yet heard it from himself. Bath (setting aside remembrances of Roderick Random and Humphrey Clinker) looked, I fancied, just as if a cemetery-full of old people had somehow made a successful rise against death, carried the place by assault, and built a city with their gravestones; in which they were trying to look alive, but with very indifferent success.

C—— is no better, and no worse. M—— and G—— send all manner of loves, and have already represented to me that the red-jacketed post-boys must be turned out for a summer expedition to Canterbury, and that there must be lunches among the cornfields, walks in Cobham Park, and a thousand other expeditions. Pray give our pretty M—— to

understand that a great deal will be expected of her, and that she will have to look her very best, to look as I have drawn her. If your Irish people turn up at Gad's at the same time, as they probably will, they shall be entertained in the yard, with muzzled dogs. I foresee that they will come over, haymaking and hopping, and will recognize their beautiful vagabonds at a glance.

I wish Reverdy Johnson would dine in private and hold his tongue. He overdoes the thing. C—— is trying to get the Pope to subscribe, and to run over to take the chair at his next dinner, on which occasion Victor Emmanuel is to propose C——'s health, and may all differences among friends be referred to him. With much love always, and in high rapture at the thought of seeing you both here,

Ever your most affectionate

C. D.

A few weeks later, while on his reading tour, he sent off the following:—

ADELPHI HOTEL, LIVERPOOL, Friday, April 9, 1869.

MY DEAR FIELDS: The faithful Russia will bring this out to you, as a sort of warrant to take you into loving custody and bring you back on her return trip.

I have been "reading" here all this week, and finish here for good to-night. To-morrow the Mayor, Corporation, and citizens give me a farewell dinner in St. George's Hall. Six hundred and fifty are to dine, and a mighty show of beauty is to be mustered besides. N—— had a great desire to see the sight, and so I suggested him as a friend to be invited. He is over at Manchester now on a visit, and will come here at midday to-morrow, and go back to London with us on Sunday afternoon. On Tuesday I read in London, and on Wednesday start off again. To-night is No. 68 out of one hundred. I am very tired of it, but I could have no such good fillip as you among the audience, and that will carry me on gayly to the end. So please to

look sharp in the matter of landing on the bosom of the used-up, worn-out, and rotten old *Parient*.

I rather think that when the 12th of June shall have shaken off these shackles, there *will* be borage on the lawn at Gad's. Your heart's desire in that matter, and in the minor particulars of Cobham Park, Rochester Castle, and Canterbury shall be fulfilled, please God! The red jackets shall turn out again upon the turnpike road, and picnics among the cherry-orchards and hop-gardens shall be heard of in Kent. Then, too, shall the Uncommercial resuscitate (being at present nightly murdered by Mr. W. Sikes) and uplift his voice again.

The chief officer of the *Russia* (a capital fellow) was at the Reading last night, and Dolby specially charged him with the care of you and yours. We shall be on the borders of Wales, and probably about Hereford, when you arrive. Dolby has insane projects of getting over here to meet you; so amiably hopeful and obviously impracticable, that I encourage him to the utmost. The regular little captain of the *Russia*, Cook, is just now changed into the *Cuba*, whence arise disputes of seniority, etc. I wish he had been with you, for I liked him very much when I was his passenger. I like to think of your being in *my* ship!

— and — have been taking it by turns to be “on the point of death,” and have been complimenting one another greatly on the fineness of the point attained. My people got a very good impression of —, and thought her a sincere and earnest little woman.

The *Russia* hauls out into the stream to-day, and I fear her people may be too busy to come to us to-night. But if any of them do, they shall have the warmest of welcomes for your sake. (By the by, a very good party of seamen from the Queen's ship *Donegal*, lying in the Mersey, have been told off to decorate St. George's Hall with the ship's bunting. They were all hanging on aloft upside down, holding to the gigantically high roof by nothing, this morning, in the most wonderfully cheerful manner.)

My son Charley has come for the dinner, and Chappell (my Proprietor, as — is n't it Wemmick? — says) is coming to-day, and Lord Dufferin (Mrs. Norton's nephew) is to come and make *the* speech. I don't envy the feelings of my noble friend when he sees the hall. Seriously, it is less adapted to speaking than Westminster Abbey, and is as large. . . .

I hope you will see Fechter in a really clever piece by Wilkie. Also you will see the Academy Exhibition, which will be a very good one; and also we will, please God, see everything and more, and everything else after that. I begin to doubt and fear on the subject of your having a horror of me after seeing the murder. I don't think a hand moved while I was doing it last night, or an eye looked away. And there was a fixed expression of horror of me, all over the theatre, which could not have been surpassed if I had been going to be hanged to that red velvet table. It is quite a new sensation to be execrated with that unanimity; and I hope it will remain so!

[Is it lawful — would that woman in the black gaiters, green veil, and spectacles, hold it so — to send my love to the pretty M——?]

Pack up, my dear Fields, and be quick.

Ever your most affectionate

C. D.

It will be remembered that Dickens broke down entirely during the month of April, being completely worn out with hard work in the Readings. He described to me with graphic earnestness, when we met in May, all the incidents connected with the final crisis, and I shall never forget how he imitated himself during that last Reading, when he nearly fell before the audience. It was a terrible blow to his constitution, and only a man of the

greatest strength and will could have survived it. When we arrived in Queenstown, this note was sent on board our steamer.

Loving welcome to England. Hurrah!

OFFICE OF ALL THE YEAR ROUND,
Wednesday, May 5, 1869.

MY DEAR —: I fear you will have been uneasy about me, and will have heard distorted accounts of the stoppage of my Readings. It is a measure of precaution and not of cure. I was too tired and too jarred by the railway fast express, travelling night and day. No half-measure could be taken; and rest being medically considered essential, we stopped. I became, thank God, myself again, almost as soon as I could rest! I am good for all country pleasures with you, and am looking forward to Gad's, Rochester Castle, Cobham Park, red jackets, and Canterbury. When you come to London we shall probably be staying at our hotel. You will learn, *here*, where to find us. I yearn to be with you both again!

Love to M——.

Ever your affectionate

C. D.

I hope this will be put into your hands on board, in Queenstown Harbor.

We met in London a few days after this, and I found him in capital spirits, with such a protracted list of things we were to do together, that, had I followed out the prescribed programme, it would have taken many more months of absence from home than I had proposed to myself. We began our long rambles among the thoroughfares that had undergone important changes since I was last in

London, taking in the noble Thames embankments, which I had never seen, and the improvements in the city markets. Dickens had moved up to London for the purpose of showing us about, and had taken rooms only a few streets off from our hotel. Here are two specimens of the welcome little notes which I constantly found on my breakfast-table : —

OFFICE OF ALL THE YEAR ROUND, LONDON,
Wednesday, May 19, 1869.

MY DEAR FIELDS : Suppose we give the weather a longer chance, and say Monday instead of Friday. I think we must be safer with that precaution. If Monday will suit you, I propose that we meet here that day, — your ladies and you and I, — and cast ourselves on the stony-hearted streets. If it be bright for St. Paul's, good ; if not, we can take some other lion that roars in dull weather. We will dine here at six, and meet here at half past two. So IF you should want to go elsewhere after dinner, it can be done, notwithstanding. Let me know in a line what you say.

O the delight of a cold bath this morning, after those lodging-houses ! And a mild sniffer of punch, on getting into the hotel last night, I found what my friend Mr. Wegg calls, "Mellering, sir, very mellering."

With kindest regards, ever affectionately,

CHARLES DICKENS.

OFFICE OF ALL THE YEAR ROUND, LONDON,
Tuesday, May 25, 1869.

MY DEAR FIELDS : First, you leave Charing Cross Station, by North Kent railway, on Wednesday, June 2d, at 2.10 for Higham Station, the next station beyond Gravesend. Now, bring your lofty mind back to the previous Saturday, next Saturday. There is only one way of combining Windsor and Richmond. That way will leave us but two hours and a

half at Windsor. This would not be long enough to enable us to see the inside of the castle, but would admit of our seeing the outside, the Long Walk, etc. I will assume that such a survey will suffice. That taken for granted, meet me at Waterloo Terminus (Loop Line for Windsor) at 10.35, on Saturday morning.

The rendezvous for Monday evening will be *here at half past eight*. As I don't know Mr. Eytinge's number in Guildford Street, will you kindly undertake to let him know that we are going out with the great Detective? And will you also give him the time and place for Gad's?

I shall be here on Friday for a few hours; meantime at Gad's aforesaid.

With love to the ladies, ever faithfully,

C. D.

During my stay in England in that summer of 1869, I made many excursions with Dickens both around the city and into the country. Among the most memorable of these London rambles was a visit to the General Post-Office, by arrangement with the authorities there, a stroll among the cheap theatres and lodging-houses for the poor, a visit to Furnival's Inn and the very room in it where "Pickwick" was written, and a walk through the thieves' quarter. Two of these expeditions were made on two consecutive nights, under the protection of police detailed for the service. On one of these nights we also visited the lock-up houses, watch-houses, and opium-eating establishments. It was in one of the horrid opium-dens that he gathered the incidents which he has related in the opening pages of "Edwin Drood." In a miserable court we

found the haggard old woman blowing at a kind of pipe made of an old penny ink-bottle. The identical words which Dickens puts into the mouth of this wretched creature in "Edwin Drood" we heard her croon as we leaned over the tattered bed on which she was lying. There was something hideous in the way this woman kept repeating, "Ye 'll pay up according, deary, won't ye?" and the Chinamen and Lascars made never-to-be-forgotten pictures in the scene. I watched Dickens intently as he went among these outcasts of London, and saw with what deep sympathy he encountered the sad and suffering in their horrid abodes. At the door of one of the penny lodging-houses (it was growing toward morning, and the raw air almost cut one to the bone), I saw him snatch a little child out of its poor drunken mother's arms, and bear it in, filthy as it was, that it might be warmed and cared for. I noticed that whenever he entered one of these wretched rooms he had a word of cheer for its inmates, and that when he left the apartment he always had a pleasant "Good night" or "God bless you" to bestow upon them. I do not think his person was ever recognized in any of these haunts, except in one instance. As we entered a low room in the worst alley we had yet visited, in which were huddled together some forty or fifty half-starved-looking wretches, I noticed a man among the crowd whispering to another and

pointing out Dickens. Both men regarded him with marked interest all the time he remained in the room, and tried to get as near him, without observation, as possible. As he turned to go out, one of these men pressed forward and said, "Good night, sir," with much feeling, in reply to Dickens's parting word.

Among other places, we went, a little past midnight, into one of the Casual Wards, which were so graphically described, some years ago, in an English magazine, by a gentleman who, as a pretended tramp, went in on a reporting expedition. We walked through an avenue of poor tired sleeping forms, all lying flat on the floor, and not one of them raised a head to look at us as we moved thoughtfully up the aisle of sorrowful humanity. I think we counted sixty or seventy prostrate beings, who had come in for a night's shelter, and had lain down worn out with fatigue and hunger. There was one pale young face to which I whispered Dickens's attention, and he stood over it with a look of sympathizing interest not to be easily forgotten. There was much ghastly comicality mingled with the horror in several of the places we visited on those two nights. We were standing in a room half filled with people of both sexes, whom the police accompanying us knew to be thieves. Many of these abandoned persons had served out their terms in jail or prison, and would probably be again sentenced

under the law. They were all silent and sullen as we entered the room, until an old woman spoke up with a strong, beery voice: "Good evening, gentlemen. We are all wery poor, but strictly honest." At which cheerful apocryphal statement, all the inmates of the room burst into boisterous laughter, and began pelting the imaginative female with epithets uncomplimentary and unsavory. Dickens's quick eye never for a moment ceased to study all these scenes of vice and gloom, and he told me afterwards that, bad as the whole thing was, it had improved infinitely since he first began to study character in those regions of crime and woe.

Between eleven and twelve o'clock on one of the evenings I have mentioned we were taken by Dickens's favorite Detective W—— into a sort of lock-up house, where persons are brought from the streets who have been engaged in brawls, or detected in the act of thieving, or who have, in short, committed any offence against the laws. Here they are examined for commitment by a sort of presiding officer, who sits all night for that purpose. We looked into some of the cells, and found them nearly filled with wretched-looking objects who had been brought in that night. To this establishment are also brought lost children who are picked up in the streets by the police, — children who have wandered away from their homes, and are not old enough to tell the magistrate where they live. It

was well on toward morning, and we were sitting in conversation with one of the officers, when the ponderous door opened and one of these small wanderers was brought in. She was the queerest little figure I ever beheld, and she walked in, holding the police officer by the hand as solemnly and quietly as if she were attending her own obsequies. She was between four and five years old, and had on what was evidently her mother's bonnet, — an enormous production, resembling a sort of coal-scuttle, manufactured after the fashion of ten or fifteen years ago. The child had, no doubt, caught up this wonderful head-gear in the absence of her parent, and had gone forth in quest of adventure. The officer reported that he had discovered her in the middle of the street, moving ponderingly along, without any regard to the horses and vehicles all about her. When asked where she lived, she mentioned a street which only existed in her own imagination, and she knew only her Christian name. When she was interrogated by the proper authorities, without the slightest apparent discomposure she replied in a steady voice, as she thought proper, to their questions. The magistrate inadvertently repeated a question as to the number of her brothers and sisters, and the child snapped out, "I told ye wunst; can't ye hear?" When asked if she would like anything, she gayly answered, "Candy, cake and *candy*." A messenger was sent out to

procure these commodities, which she instantly seized on their arrival and began to devour. She showed no signs of fear, until one of the officers untied the huge bonnet and took it off, when she tearfully insisted upon being put into it again. I was greatly impressed by the ingenious efforts of the excellent men in the room to learn from the child where she lived, and who her parents were. Dickens sat looking at the little figure with profound interest, and soon came forward and asked permission to speak with the child. Of course his request was granted, and I don't know when I have enjoyed a conversation more. She made some very smart answers, which convulsed us all with laughter as we stood looking on; and the creator of "little Nell" and "Paul Dombey" gave her up in despair. He was so much interested in the little vagrant, that he sent a messenger next morning to learn if the rightful owner of the bonnet had been found. Report came back, on a duly printed form, setting forth that the anxious father and mother had applied for the child at three o'clock in the morning, and had borne her away in triumph to her home.

It was a warm summer afternoon towards the close of the day, when Dickens went with us to visit the London Post-Office. He said: "I know nothing which could give a stranger a better idea

of the size of London than that great institution. The hurry and rush of letters! men up to their chin in letters! nothing but letters everywhere! the air full of letters! — suddenly the clock strikes; not a person is to be seen, *nor* a letter: only one man with a lantern peering about and putting one drop-letter into a box.” For two hours we went from room to room, with him as our guide, up stairs and down stairs, observing the myriad clerks at their various avocations, with letters for the North Pole, for the South Pole, for Egypt and Alaska, Darien and the next street.

The “Blind Man,” as he was called, appeared to afford Dickens as much amusement as if he saw his work then for the first time; but this was one of the qualities of his genius; there was inexhaustibility and freshness in everything to which he turned his attention. The ingenuity and loving care shown by the “Blind Man” in deciphering or guessing at the apparently inexplicable addresses on letters and parcels excited his admiration. “What a lesson to all of us,” he could not help saying, “to be careful in preparing our letters for the mail!” His own were always directed with such exquisite care, however, that had he been brother to the “Blind Man,” and considered it his special work in life to teach others how to save that officer trouble, he could hardly have done better.

Leaving the hurry and bustle of the Post-Office

behind us, we strolled out into the streets of London. It was past eight o'clock, but the beauty of the soft June sunset was only then overspreading the misty heavens. Every sound of traffic had died out of those turbulent thoroughfares; now and then a belated figure would hurry past us and disappear, or perhaps in turning the corner would linger to "take a good look" at Charles Dickens. But even these stragglers soon dispersed, leaving us alone in the light of day and the sweet living air to heighten the sensation of a dream. We came through White Friars to the Temple, and thence into the Temple Garden, where our very voices echoed. Dickens pointed up to Talfourd's room, and recalled with tenderness the merry hours they had passed together in the old place. Of course we hunted out Goldsmith's abode, and Dr. Johnson's, saw the site of the Earl of Essex's palace, and the steps by which he was wont to descend to the river, now so far removed. But most interesting of all to us there was "Pip's" room, to which Dickens led us, and the staircase where the convict stumbled up in the dark, and the chimney nearest the river where, although less exposed than in "Pip's" days, we could well understand how "the wind shook the house that night like discharges of cannon, or breakings of a sea." We looked in at the dark old staircase, so dark on that night when "the lamps were blown out, and the lamps on the

-

bridges and the shore were shuddering," and then went on to take a peep, half shuddering ourselves, at the narrow street where "Pip" by and by found a lodging for the convict. Nothing dark could long survive in our minds on that June night, when the whole scene was so like the airy work of imagination. Past the Temple, past the garden to the river, mistily fair, with a few boats moving upon its surface, the convict's story was forgotten, and we only knew this was Dickens's home, where he had lived and written, lying in the calm light of its fairest mood.

Dickens had timed our visit to his country house in Kent, and arranged that we should appear at Gad's Hill with the nightingales. Arriving at the Higham station on a bright June day in 1869, we found his stout little pony ready to take us up the hill; and before we had proceeded far on the road, the master himself came out to welcome us on the way. He looked brown and hearty, and told us he had passed a breezy morning writing in the *châlet*. We had parted from him only a few days before in London, but I thought the country air had already begun to exert its strengthening influence, — a process he said which commonly set in the moment he reached his garden gate.

It was ten years since I had seen Gad's Hill

Place, and I observed at once what extensive improvements had been made during that period. Dickens had increased his estate by adding quite a large tract of land on the opposite side of the road, and a beautiful meadow at the back of the house. He had connected the front lawn, by a passageway running under the road, with beautifully wooded grounds, on which was erected the Swiss chalet, a present from Fechter. The old house, too, had been greatly improved, and there was an air of assured comfort and ease about the charming establishment. No one could surpass Dickens as a host; and as there were certain household rules (hours for meals, recreation, etc.), he at once announced them, so that visitors never lost any time "wondering" when this or that was to happen.

Lunch over, we were taken round to see the dogs, and Dickens gave us a rapid biographical account of each as we made acquaintance with the whole colony. One old fellow, who had grown superannuated and nearly blind, raised himself up and laid his great black head against Dickens's breast as if he loved him. All were spoken to with pleasant words of greeting, and the whole troop seemed wild with joy over the master's visit. "Linda" put up her shaggy paw to be shaken at parting; and as we left the dog-houses, our host told us some amusing anecdotes of his favorite friends.

Dickens's admiration of Hogarth was unbounded,

and he had hung the staircase leading up from the hall of his house with fine old impressions of the great master's best works. Observing our immediate interest in these pictures, he seemed greatly pleased, and proceeded at once to point out in his graphic way what had struck his own fancy most in Hogarth's genius. He had made a study of the painter's *thought* as displayed in these works, and his talk about the artist was delightful. He used to say he never came down the stairs without pausing with new wonder over the fertility of the mind that had conceived and the hand that had executed these powerful pictures of human life; and I cannot forget with what fervid energy and feeling he repeated one day, as we were standing together on the stairs in front of the Hogarth pictures, Dr. Johnson's epitaph on the painter: —

“The hand of him here torpid lies,
That drew the essential form of grace;
Here closed in death the attentive eyes
That saw the manners in the face.”

Every day we had out-of-door games, such as “Bowls,” “Aunt Sally,” and the like, Dickens leading off with great spirit and fun. Billiards came after dinner, and during the evening we had charades and dancing. There was no end to the new diversions our kind host was in the habit of proposing, so that constant cheerfulness reigned at Gad's Hill. He went into his work-room, as he

called it, soon after breakfast, and wrote till twelve o'clock; then he came out, ready for a long walk. The country about Gad's Hill is admirably adapted for pedestrian exercise, and we went forth every day, rain or shine, for a stretch. Twelve, fifteen, even twenty miles were not too much for Dickens, and many a long tramp we have had over the hop-country together. Chatham, Rochester, Cobham Park, Maidstone, — anywhere, out under the open sky and into the free air! Then Dickens was at his best, and talked. Swinging his blackthorn stick, his lithe figure sprang forward over the ground, and it took a practised pair of legs to keep alongside of his voice. In these expeditions I heard from his own lips delightful reminiscences of his early days in the region we were then traversing, and charming narratives of incidents connected with the writing of his books.

Dickens's association with Gad's Hill, the city of Rochester, the road to Canterbury, and the old cathedral town itself, dates back to his earliest years. In "David Copperfield," the most autobiographic of all his books, we find him, a little boy, (so small, that the landlady is called to peer over the counter and catch a glimpse of the tiny lad who possesses such "a spirit,") trudging over the old Kent Road to Dover. "I see myself," he writes, "as evening closes in, coming over the bridge at Rochester, footsore and tired, and eating

bread that I had bought for supper. One or two little houses, with the notice, 'Lodgings for Travelers,' hanging out, had tempted me; but I was afraid of spending the few pence I had, and was even more afraid of the vicious looks of the trampers I had met or overtaken. I sought no shelter, therefore, but the sky; and toiling into Chatham, — which in that night's aspect is a mere dream of chalk, and drawbridges, and mastless ships in a muddy river, roofed like Noah's arks, — crept, at last, upon a sort of grass-grown battery overhanging a lane, where a sentry was walking to and fro. Here I lay down near a cannon; and, happy in the society of the sentry's footsteps, though he knew no more of my being above him than the boys at Salem House had known of my lying by the wall, slept soundly until morning." Thus early he noticed "the trampers" which infest the old Dover Road, and observed them in their numberless gypsy-like variety; thus early he looked lovingly on Gad's Hill Place, and wished it might be his own, if he ever grew up to be a man. His earliest memories were filled with pictures of the endless hop-grounds and orchards, and the little child "thought it all extremely beautiful!"

Through the long years of his short life he was always consistent in his love for Kent and the old surroundings. When the after days came and while travelling abroad, how vividly the childish

love returned ! As he passed rapidly over the road on his way to France he once wrote : “ Midway between Gravesend and Rochester the widening river was bearing the ships, white-sailed or black-smoked, out to sea, when I noticed by the wayside a very queer small boy.

“ ‘ Halloa ! ’ said I to the very queer small boy, ‘ where do you live ? ’

“ ‘ At Chatham, ’ says he.

“ ‘ What do you do there ? ’ said I.

“ ‘ I go to school, ’ says he.

“ I took him up in a moment, and we went on. Presently the very queer small boy says, ‘ This is Gad’s Hill we are coming to, where Falstaff went out to rob those travellers, and ran away.’

“ ‘ You know something about Falstaff, eh ? ’ said I.

“ ‘ All about him, ’ said the very queer small boy. ‘ I am old (I am nine) and I read all sorts of books. But *do* let us stop at the top of the hill, and look at the house there, if you please ! ’

“ ‘ You admire that house, ’ said I.

“ ‘ Bless you, sir, ’ said the very queer small boy, ‘ when I was not more than half as old as nine, it used to be a treat for me to be brought to look at it. And now I am nine, I come by myself to look at it. And ever since I can recollect, my father, seeing me so fond of it, has often said to me, “ If you were to be very persevering and were to work

hard, you might some day come to live in it." 'Though that's impossible!' said the very queer small boy, drawing a low breath, and now staring at the house out of window with all his might. I was rather annoyed to be told this by the very queer small boy; for that house happens to be *my* house, and I have reason to believe that what he said was true."

What stay-at-home is there who does not know the Bull Inn at Rochester, from which Mr. Tuppman and Mr. Jingle attended the ball, Mr. Jingle wearing Mr. Winkle's coat? or who has not seen in fancy the "gypsy-tramp," the "show-tramp," the "cheap jack," the "tramp-children," and the "Irish hoppers" all passing over "the Kentish Road, bordered" in their favorite resting-place "on either side by a wood, and having on one hand, between the road-dust and the trees, a skirting patch of grass? Wild-flowers grow in abundance on this spot, and it lies high and airy, with the distant river stealing steadily away to the ocean, like a man's life."

Sitting in the beautiful chalet during his later years and watching this same river stealing away like his own life, he never could find a harsh word for the tramps, and many and many a one has gone over the road rejoicing because of some kindness received from his hands. Every precaution was taken to protect a house exposed as his was to these

ing with a kindly shake of the hand all round, started to walk through Cobham woods on his way towards London. Then on his lonely road, "the mists began to rise in the most beautiful manner and the sun to shine; and as I went on," he writes, "through the bracing air, seeing the hoar-frost sparkle everywhere, I felt as if all nature shared in the joy of the great Birthday. Going through the woods, the softness of my tread upon the mossy ground and among the brown leaves enhanced the Christmas sacredness by which I felt surrounded. As the whitened stems environed me, I thought how the Founder of the time had never raised his benignant hand, save to bless and heal, except in the case of one unconscious tree."

Now we found ourselves on the same ground, surrounded by the full beauty of the summer-time. The hand of Art conspiring with Nature had planted rhododendrons, as if in their native soil beneath the forest trees. They were in one universal flame of blossoms, as far as the eye could see. Lord and Lady D——, the kindest and most hospitable of neighbors, were absent; there was not a living figure beside ourselves to break the solitude, and we waudered on and on with the wild birds for companions as in our native wildernesses. By and by we came near Cobham Hall, with its fine lawns and far-sweeping landscape, and workmen and gardeners and a general air of summer

luxury. But to-day we were to go past the hall and lunch on a green slope under the trees, (was it *just* the spot where Mr. Pickwick tried the cold punch and found it satisfactory? I never liked to ask!) and after making the old woods ring with the clatter and clink of our noontide meal, mingled with floods of laughter, were to come to the village, and to the very inn from which the disconsolate Mr. Tupman wrote to Mr. Pickwick, after his adventure with Miss Wardle. There is the old sign, and here we are at the Leather Bottle, Cobham, Kent. "There's no doubt whatever about that." Dickens's modesty would not allow him to go in, so we made the most of an outside study of the quaint old place as we strolled by; also of the cottages whose inmates were evidently no strangers to our party, but were cared for by them as English cottagers are so often looked after by the kindly ladies in their neighborhood. And there was the old churchyard, "where the dead had been quietly buried 'in the sure and certain hope' which Christmas-time inspired." There too were the children, whom, seeing at their play, he could not but be loving, remembering who had loved them! One party of urchins swinging on a gate reminded us vividly of Collins, the painter. Here was his composition to the life. Every lover of rural scenery must recall the little fellow on the top of a five-barred gate in the picture Collins painted, known widely by the

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fine engraving made of it at the time. And there too were the blossoming gardens, which now shone in their new garments of resurrection. The stillness of midsummer noon crept over everything as we lingered in the sun and shadow of the old village. Slowly circling the hall, we came upon an avenue of lime-trees leading up to a stately doorway in the distance. The path was overgrown, birds and squirrels were hopping unconcernedly over the ground and the gates and chains were rusty with disuse. "This avenue," said Dickens, as we leaned upon the wall and looked into its cool shadows, "is never crossed except to bear the dead body of the lord of the hall to its last resting-place; a remnant of superstition, and one which Lord and Lady D—— would be glad to do away with, but the villagers would never hear of such a thing, and would consider it certain death to any person who should go or come through this entrance. It would be a highly unpopular movement for the present occupants to attempt to uproot this absurd idea, and they have given up all thoughts of it for the time."

It was on a subsequent visit to Cobham village that we explored the "College," an old foundation of the reign of Edward III. for the aged poor of both sexes. Each occupant of the various small apartments was sitting at his or her door, which opened on a grassy enclosure with arches like an abandoned cloister of some old cathedral. Such a

motley society, brought together under such unnatural circumstances, would of course interest Dickens. He seemed to take a profound pleasure in wandering about the place, which was evidently filled with the associations of former visits in his own mind. He was usually possessed by a child-like eagerness to go to any spot which he had made up his mind it was best to visit, and quick to come away, but he lingered long about this leafy old haunt on that Sunday afternoon.

Of Cobham Hall itself much might be written without conveying an adequate idea of its peculiar interest to this generation. The terraces, and lawns, and cedar-trees, and deer park, the names of Edward III. and Elizabeth, the famous old Cobhams and their long line of distinguished descendants, their invaluable pictures and historic chapel, have all been the common property of the past and of the present. But the air of comfort and hospitality diffused about the place by the present owners belongs exclusively to our time, and a little Swiss chalet removed from Gad's Hill, standing not far from the great house, will always connect the name of Charles Dickens with the place he loved so well. The chalet has been transferred thither as a tribute from the Dickens family to the kindness of their friends and former neighbors. We could not fail, during our visit, to think of the connection his name would always have with Cobham Hall, though

he was then still by our side, and the little chalet yet remained embowered in its own green trees, overlooking the sail-dotted Medway as it flowed towards the Thames.

The old city of Rochester, to which we have already referred as being particularly well known to all Mr. Pickwick's admirers, is within walking distance from Gad's Hill Place, and was the object of daily visits from its occupants. The ancient castle, one of the best ruins in England, as Dickens loved to say, because less has been done to it, rises with rugged walls precipitously from the river. It is wholly unrestored; just enough care has been bestowed to prevent its utter destruction, but otherwise it stands as it has stood and crumbled from year to year. We climbed painfully up to the highest steep of its loftiest tower, and looked down on the wonderful scene spread out in the glory of a summer sunset. Below, a clear trickling stream flowed and tinkled as it has done since the rope was first lowered in the year 800 to bring the bucket up over the worn stones which still remain to attest the fact. How happy Dickens was in the beauty of that scene! What delight he took in rebuilding the old place, with every legend of which he proved himself familiar, and repopling it out of the storehouse of his fancy. "Here was the kitchen, and there the dining-hall! How frightfully dark they must have been in those days, with such

small slits for windows, and the fireplaces without chimneys ! There were the galleries ; this is one of the four towers ; the others, you will understand, corresponded with this ; and now, if you 're not dizzy, we will come out on the battlements for the view ! ” Up we went, of course, following our cheery leader until we stood among the topmost wall-flowers, which were waving yellow and sweet in the sunset air. East and west, north and south, our eyes traversed the beautiful garden land of Kent, the land beloved of poets through the centuries. Below lay the city of Rochester on one hand, and in the heart of it an old inn where a carrier was even then getting out, or putting in, horses and wagon for the night. A procession, with banners and music, was moving slowly by the tavern, and the quaint costumes in which the men were dressed suggested days long past, when far other scenes were going forward in this locality. It was almost like a pageant marching out of antiquity for our delectation. Our master of ceremonies revelled that day in repeopling the queer old streets down into which we were looking from our charming elevation. His delightful fancy seemed especially alert on that occasion, and we lived over again with him many a chapter in the history of Rochester, full of interest to those of us who had come from a land where all is new and comparatively barren of romance.

Below, on the other side, was the river Medway, from whose depths the castle once rose steeply. Now the *débris* and perhaps also a slight swerving of the river from its old course have left a rough margin, over which it would not be difficult to make an ascent. Rochester Bridge, too, is here, and the "windy hills" in the distance; and again, on the other hand, Chatham, and beyond, the Thames, with the sunset tingeing the many-colored sails. We were not easily persuaded to descend from our picturesque vantage-ground; but the master's hand led us gently on from point to point, until we found ourselves, before we were aware, on the grassy slope outside the castle wall. Besides, there was the cathedral to be visited, and the tomb of Richard Watts, "with the effigy of worthy Master Richard starting out of it like a ship's figure-head."

After seeing the cathedral, we went along the silent High Street, past queer Elizabethan houses with endless gables and fences and lattice-windows, until we came to Watts's Charity, the house of entertainment for six poor travellers. The establishment is so familiar to all lovers of Dickens through his description of it in the article entitled "Seven Poor Travellers" among his "Uncommercial" papers, that little is left to be said on that subject; except perhaps that no autobiographic sketch ever gave a more faithful picture, a closer portrait, than is there conveyed.

Dickens's fancy for Rochester, and his numberless associations with it, have left traces of that city in almost everything he wrote. From the time when Mr. Snodgrass first discovered the castle ruin from Rochester Bridge, to the last chapter of *Edwin Drood*, we observe hints of the city's quaintness or silence ; the unending pavements, which go on and on till the wisest head would be puzzled to know where Rochester ends and where Chatham begins ; the disposition of Father Time to have his own unimpeded way therein, and of the gray cathedral towers which loom up in the background of many a sketch and tale. Rochester, too, is on the way to Canterbury, Dickens's best loved cathedral, the home of Agnes Wickfield, the sunny spot in the life and memory of David Copperfield. David was particularly small, as we are told, when he first saw Canterbury, but he was already familiar with Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, The Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe, who came out, as he says, a glorious host, to keep him company. Naturally, the calm old place, the green nooks, the beauty of the cathedral, possessed a better chance with him than with many others, and surely no one could have loved them more. In the later years of his life the crowning-point of the summer holidays was "a pilgrimage to Canterbury."

The sun shone merrily through the day when he

chose to carry us thither. Early in the morning the whole house was astir; large hampers were packed, ladies and gentlemen were clad in gay midsummer attire, and, soon after breakfast, huge carriages with four horses, and postilions with red coats and top-boots, after the fashion of the olden time, were drawn up before the door. Presently we were moving lightly over the road, the hop-vines dancing on the poles on either side, the orchards looking invitingly cool, the oast-houses fanning with their wide arms, the river glowing from time to time through the landscape. We made such a clatter passing through Rochester, that all the main street turned out to see the carriages, and, being obliged to stop the horses a moment, a shopkeeper, desirous of discovering Dickens among the party, hit upon the wrong man, and confused an humble individual among the company by calling a crowd, pointing him out as Dickens, and making him the mark of eager eyes. This incident seemed very odd to us in a place he knew so well. On we clattered, leaving the echoing street behind us, on and on for many a mile, until noon, when, finding a green wood and clear stream by the roadside, we encamped under the shadow of the trees in a retired spot for lunch. Again we went on, through quaint towns and lonely roads, until we came to Canterbury, in the yellow afternoon. The bells for service were ringing as we drove under the stone archway

into the soundless streets. The whole town seemed to be enjoying a simultaneous nap, from which it was aroused by our horses' hoofs. Out the people ran, at this signal, into the highway, and we were glad to descend at some distance from the centre of the city, thus leaving the excitement behind us. We had been exposed to the hot rays of the sun all day, and the change into the shadow of the cathedral was refreshing. Service was going forward as we entered ; we sat down, therefore, and joined our voices with those of the choristers. Dickens, with tireless observation, noted how sleepy and inane were the faces of many of the singers, to whom this beautiful service was but a sickening monotony of repetition. The words, too, were gabbled over in a manner anything but impressive. He was such a downright enemy to form, as substituted for religion, that any dash of untruth or unreality was abhorrent to him. When the last sounds died away in the cathedral we came out again into the cloisters, and sauntered about until the shadows fell over the beautiful enclosure. We were hospitably entreated, and listened to many an historical tale of tomb and stone and grassy nook ; but under all we were listening to the heart of our companion, who had so often wandered thither in his solitude, and was now re-reading the stories these urns had prepared for him.

During one of his winter visits, he says (in "Copperfield") : —

“Coming into Canterbury, I loitered through the old streets with a sober pleasure that calmed my spirits and eased my heart. There were the old signs, the old names over the shops, the old people serving in them. It appeared so long since I had been a school-boy there, that I wondered the place was so little changed, until I reflected how little I was changed myself. Strange to say, that quiet influence which was inseparable in my mind from Agnes seemed to pervade even the city where she dwelt. The venerable cathedral towers, and the old jackdaws and rooks, whose airy voices made them more retired than perfect silence would have done ; the battered gateways, once stuck full with statues, long thrown down and crumbled away, like the reverential pilgrims who had gazed upon them ; the still nooks, where the ivied growth of centuries crept over gabled ends and ruined walls ; the ancient houses ; the pastoral landscape of field, orchard, and garden ; — everywhere, in everything, I felt the same serene air, the same calm, thoughtful, softening spirit.”

Walking away and leaving Canterbury behind us forever, we came again into the voiceless streets, past a “very old house bulging out over the road, . . . quite spotless in its cleanliness, the old-fashioned brass knocker on the low, arched door ornamented with carved garlands of fruit and flowers, twinkling like a star,” the very house,

perhaps, "with angles and corners and carvings and mouldings," where David Copperfield was sent to school. We were turned off with a laughing reply, when we ventured to accuse this particular house of being *the one*, and were told there were several that "would do"; which was quite true, for nothing could be more quaint, more satisfactory to all, from the lovers of Chaucer to the lovers of Dickens, than this same city of Canterbury. The sun had set as we rattled noisily out of the ancient place that afternoon, and along the high road, which was quite novel in its evening aspect. There was no lingering now; on and on we went, the postillions flying up and down on the backs of their huge horses, their red coats glancing in the occasional gleams of wayside lamps, fire-flies making the orchard shine, the sunset lighting up vast clouds that lay across the western sky, and the whole scene filled with evening stillness. When we stopped to change horses, the quiet was almost oppressive. Soon after nine we espied the welcome lantern of Gad's Hill Place and the open gates. And so ended Dickens's last pilgrimage to Canterbury.

There was another interesting spot near Gad's Hill which was one of Dickens's haunts, and this was the "Druid-stone," as it is called, at Maidstone. This is within walking distance of his house, along the breezy hillside road, which we re-

member blossomy and wavy in the summer season, with open spaces in the hedges where one may look over wide hilly slopes, and at times come upon strange cuts down into the chalk which pervades this district. We turned into a lane from the dusty road, and, following our leader over a barred gate, came into wide grassy fields full of summer's bloom and glory. A short walk farther brought us to the Druid-stone, which Dickens thought to be, from the fitness of its position, simply a vantage-ground chosen by priests, — whether Druid or Christian of course it would be impossible to say, — from which to address a multitude. The rock served as a kind of background and sounding-board, while the beautiful sloping of the sward upward from the speaker made it an excellent position for out-of-door discourses. On this day it was only a blooming solitude, where the birds had done all the talking, until we arrived. It was a fine afternoon haunt, and one worthy of a visit, apart from the associations which make the place dear.

One of the weirdest neighborhoods to Gad's Hill, and one of those most closely associated with Dickens, is the village of Cooling. A cloudy day proved well enough for Cooling; indeed, was undoubtedly chosen by the adroit master of hospitalities as being a fitting sky to show the dark landscape of "Great Expectations." The pony-carriage went thither to accompany the walking party and carry the baskets;

the whole way, as we remember, leading on among narrow lanes, where heavy carriages were seldom seen. We are told in the novel, "On every rail and gate, wet lay clammy, and the marsh mist was so thick that the wooden finger on the post directing people to our village — a direction which they never accepted, for they never came there — was invisible to me until I was close under it." The lanes certainly wore that aspect of never being accepted as a way of travel; but this was a delightful recommendation to our walk, for summer kept her own way there, and grass and wild-flowers were abundant. It was already noon, and low clouds and mists were lying about the earth and sky as we approached a forlorn little village on the edge of the wide marshes described in the opening of the novel. This was Cooling, and passing by the few cottages, the decayed rectory, and straggling buildings, we came at length to the churchyard. It took but a short time to make us feel at home there, with the marshes on one hand, the low wall over which Pip saw the convict climb before he dared to run away, "the five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, . . . sacred to the memory of five little brothers, . . . to which I have been indebted for a belief that they all had been born on their backs, with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence"; — all these points, combined with the

general dreariness of the landscape, the far-stretching marshes, and the distant sea-line, soon revealed to us that this was Pip's country, and we might momentarily expect to see the convict's head, or to hear the clank of his chain, over that low wall.

We were in the churchyard now, having left the pony within eye-shot, and taken the baskets along with us, and were standing on one of those very lozenges, somewhat grass-grown by this time, and deciphering the inscriptions. On tiptoe we could get a wide view of the marsh, with the wind sweeping in a lonely limitless way through the tall grasses. Presently hearing Dickens's cheery call, we turned to see what he was doing. He had chosen a good flat gravestone in one corner (the corner farthest from the marsh and Pip's little brothers and the expected convict), had spread a wide napkin thereupon after the fashion of a domestic dinner-table, and was rapidly transferring the contents of the hampers to that point. The horrible whimsicality of trying to eat and make merry under these deplorable circumstances, the tragic-comic character of the scene, appeared to take him by surprise. He at once threw himself into it (as he says in "Copperfield" he was wont to do with anything to which he had laid his hand) with fantastic eagerness. Having spread the table after the most approved style, he suddenly disappeared behind the wall for a moment, transformed himself by

the aid of a towel and napkin into a first-class head-waiter, reappeared, laid a row of plates along the top of the wall, as at a bar-room or eating-house, again retreated to the other side with some provisions, and, making the gentlemen of the party stand up to the wall, went through the whole play with most entire gravity. When we had wound up with a good laugh, and were again seated together on the grass around the table, we espied two wretched figures, not the convicts this time although we might have easily persuaded ourselves so, but only tramps gazing at us over the wall from the marsh side as they approached, and finally sitting down just outside the churchyard gate. They looked wretchedly hungry and miserable, and Dickens said at once, starting up, "Come, let us offer them a glass of wine and something good for lunch." He was about to carry them himself, when what he considered a happy thought seemed to strike him. "*You* shall carry it to them," he cried, turning to one of the ladies; "it will be less like a charity and more like a kindness if one of you should speak to the poor souls!" This was so much in character for him, who stopped always to choose the most delicate way of doing a kind deed, that the memory of this little incident remains, while much, alas! of his wit and wisdom have vanished beyond the power of reproducing. We feasted on the satisfaction the tramps took in their lunch,

long after our own was concluded, and, seeing them well off on their road again, took up our own way to Gad's Hill Place. How comfortable it looked on our return; how beautifully the afternoon gleams of sunshine shone upon the holly-trees by the porch; how we turned away from the door and went into the playground, where we bowled on the green turf, until the tall maid in her spotless cap was seen bringing the five-o'clock tea thitherward; how the dews and the setting sun warned us at last we must prepare for dinner; and how Dickens played longer and harder than any one of the company, scorning the idea of going in to tea at that hour, and beating his ball instead, quite the youngest of the company up to the last moment! — all this returns with vivid distinctness as I write these inadequate words.

Many days and weeks passed over after those June days were ended before we were to see Dickens again. Our meeting then was at the station in London, on our way to Gad's Hill once more. He was always early at a railway station, he said, if only to save himself the unnecessary and wasteful excitement hurry commonly produces; and so he came to meet us with a cheery manner, as if care were shut up in some desk or closet he had left behind, and he were ready to make the day a gay one, whatever the sun might say to it. A small roll of manuscript in his hand led him soon to confess that

a new story was already begun ; but this communication was made in the utmost confidence, as if to account for any otherwise unexplainable absences, physically or mentally, from our society, which might occur. But there were no gaps during that autumn afternoon of return to Gad's Hill. He told us how summer had brought him no vacation this year, and only two days of recreation. One of those, he said, was spent with his family at "Rosherville Gardens," "the place," as a huge advertisement informed us, "to spend a happy day." His curiosity with regard to all entertainments for the people, he said to us, carried him thither, and he seemed to have been amused and rewarded by his visit. The previous Sunday had found him in London ; he was anxious to reach Gad's Hill before the afternoon, but in order to accomplish this he must walk nine miles to a way station, which he did. Coming to the little village, he inquired where the station was, and, being shown in the wrong direction, walked calmly down a narrow road which did not lead there at all. "On I went," he said, "in the perfect sunshine, over yellow leaves, without even a wandering breeze to break the silence, when suddenly I came upon three or four antique wooden houses standing under trees on the borders of a lovely stream, and, a little farther, upon an ancient doorway to a grand hall, perhaps the home of some bishop of the olden

time. The road came to an end there, and I was obliged to retrace my steps; but anything more entirely peaceful and beautiful in its aspect on that autumnal day than this retreat, forgotten by the world, I almost never saw." He was eager, too, to describe for our entertainment one of the yearly cricket-matches among the villagers at Gad's Hill which had just come off. Some of the toasts at the supper afterward were as old as the time of Queen Anne. For instance, —

"More jigs,
Fewer persons!"

delivered with all seriousness; a later one was, "May the walls of old England never be covered with French polish!"

Once more we recall a morning at Gad's Hill, a soft white haze over everything, and the yellow sun burning through. The birds were singing, and beauty and calm pervaded the whole scene. We strayed through Cobham Park and saw the lovely vistas through the autumnal haze; once more we reclined in the cool chalet in the afternoon, and watched the vessels going and coming upon the ever-moving river. Suddenly all has vanished; and now, neither spring nor autumn, nor flowers nor birds, nor dawn nor sunset, nor the ever-moving river, can be the same to any of us again. We have all drifted down upon the river of Time,

and one has already sailed out into the illimitable ocean.

On a pleasant Sunday morning in October, 1869, as I sat looking out on the beautiful landscape from my chamber window at Gad's Hill, a servant tapped at my door and gave me a summons from Dickens, written in his drollest manner on a sheet of paper, bidding me descend into his study on business of great importance. That day I heard from the author's lips the first chapters of "Edwin Drood," the concluding lines of which initial pages were then scarcely dry from the pen. The story is unfinished, and he who read that autumn morning with such vigor of voice and dramatic power is in his grave. This private reading took place in the little room where the great novelist for many years had been accustomed to write, and in the house where on a pleasant evening in the following June he died. The spot is one of the loveliest in Kent, and must always be remembered as the last residence of Charles Dickens. He used to declare his firm belief that Shakespeare was specially fond of Kent, and that the poet chose Gad's Hill and Rochester for the scenery of his plays from intimate personal knowledge of their localities. He said he had no manner of doubt but that one of Shakespeare's haunts was the old inn at Rochester, and that this conviction came forcibly upon him one night as he

was walking that way, and discovered Charles's Wain over the chimney just as Shakespeare has described it, in words put into the mouth of the carrier in *King Henry IV.* There is no prettier place than Gad's Hill in all England for the earliest and latest flowers, and Dickens chose it, when he had arrived at the fulness of his fame and prosperity, as the home in which he most wished to spend the remainder of his days. When a boy, he would often pass the house with his father and frequently said to him, "If ever I have a dwelling of my own, Gad's Hill Place is the house I mean to buy." In that beautiful retreat he had for many years been accustomed to welcome his friends, and find relaxation from the crowded life of London. On the lawn playing at bowls, in the Swiss summer-house charmingly shaded by green leaves, he always seemed the best part of summer, beautiful as the season is in the delightful region where he lived.

There he could be most thoroughly enjoyed, for he never seemed so cheerfully at home anywhere else. At his own table, surrounded by his family, and a few guests, old acquaintances from town,—among them sometimes Forster, Carlyle, Reade, Collins, Layard, MacLise, Stone, Macready, Talfourd,—he was always the choicest and liveliest companion. He was not what is called in society a professed talker, but he was something far better and rarer.

In his own inimitable manner he would frequently relate to me, if prompted, stories of his youthful days, when he was toiling on the London Morning Chronicle, passing sleepless hours as a reporter on the road in a post-chaise, driving day and night from point to point to take down the speeches of Shiel or O'Connell. He liked to describe the post-boys, who were accustomed to hurry him over the road that he might reach London in advance of his rival reporters, while, by the aid of a lantern, he was writing out for the press, as he flew over the ground, the words he had taken down in short-hand. Those were his days of severe training, when in rain and sleet and cold he dashed along, scarcely able to keep the blinding mud out of his tired eyes; and he imputed much of his ability for steady hard work to his practice as a reporter, kept at his grinding business, and determined if possible to earn seven guineas a week. A large sheet was started at this period of his life, in which all the important speeches of Parliament were to be reported *verbatim* for future reference. Dickens was engaged on this gigantic journal. Mr. Stanley (afterwards Lord Derby) had spoken at great length on the condition of Ireland. It was a long and eloquent speech, occupying many hours in the delivery. Eight reporters were sent in to do the work. Each one was required to report three quarters of an hour, then to retire, write out his

portion, and to be succeeded by the next. Young Dickens was detailed to lead off with the first part. It also fell to his lot, when the time came round, to report the closing portions of the speech. On Saturday the whole was given to the press, and Dickens ran down to the country for a Sunday's rest. Sunday morning had scarcely dawned, when his father, who was a man of immense energy, made his appearance in his son's sleeping-room. Mr. Stanley was so dissatisfied with what he found in print, except the beginning and ending of his speech (just what Dickens had reported) that he sent immediately to the office and obtained the sheets of those parts of the report. He there found the name of the reporter, which, according to custom, was written on the margin. Then he requested that the young man bearing the name of Dickens should be immediately sent for. Dickens's father, all aglow with the prospect of probable promotion in the office, went immediately to his son's stopping-place in the country and brought him back to London. In telling the story, Dickens said, "I remember perfectly to this day the aspect of the room I was shown into, and the two persons in it, Mr. Stanley and his father. Both gentlemen were extremely courteous to me, but I noted their evident surprise at the appearance of so young a man. While we spoke together, I had taken a seat extended to me in the middle of the room. Mr.

Stanley told me he wished to go over the whole speech and have it written out by me, and if I were ready he would begin now. Where would I like to sit? I told him I was very well where I was, and we could begin immediately. He tried to induce me to sit at a desk, but at that time in the House of Commons there was nothing but one's knees to write upon, and I had formed the habit of doing my work in that way. Without further pause he began and went rapidly on, hour after hour, to the end, often becoming very much excited and frequently bringing down his hand with great violence upon the desk near which he stood."

I have before me, as I write, an unpublished autograph letter of young Dickens, which he sent off to his employer in November, 1835, while he was on a reporting expedition for the *Morning Chronicle*. At that early stage of his career he seems to have had that unfailing accuracy of statement so marked in after years when he became famous. The letter was given to me several years ago by one of Dickens's brother reporters. Thus it runs:—

GEORGE AND PELICAN, NEWBURY, Sunday Morning

DEAR FRASER In conjunction with *The Herald* we have arranged for a Horse Express from Marlborough to London on Tuesday night, to go the whole distance at the rate of thirteen miles an hour, for six guineas: half has been paid, but, to insure despatch, the remainder is withheld until the boy arrives at the office, when he will produce a paper with a copy of the agreement on one side, and an order for three

guineas (signed by myself) on the other. Will you take care that it is duly honored? A Boy from The Herald will be in waiting at our office for their copy; and Lyons begs me to remind you most strongly that it is an indispensable part of our agreement *that he should not be detained one instant.*

We go to Bristol to-day, and if we are equally fortunate in laying the chaise-horses, I hope the packet will reach town by seven. As all the papers have arranged to leave Bristol the moment Russell is down, we have determined on adopting the same plan, — one of us will go to Marlborough in the chaise with one Herald man, and the other remain at Bristol with the second Herald man to conclude the account for the next day. The Times has ordered a chaise and four the whole distance, so there is every probability of our beating them hollow. From all we hear, we think the Herald, relying on the packet reaching town early, intends publishing the report in their first Edition. This is, however, of course, mere speculation on our parts, as we have no direct means of ascertaining their intention.

I think I have now given you all needful information. I have only in conclusion to impress upon you the necessity of having all the compositors ready, at a very early hour, for if Russell be down by half past eight, we hope to have his speech in town at six.

Believe me (for self and Beard) very truly yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

Nov, 1835.

THOMAS FRASER, ESQ., Morning Chronicle Office.

No writer ever lived whose method was more exact, whose industry was more constant, and whose punctuality was more marked, than those of Charles Dickens. Authorship never became a hackneyed pursuit with him, and he once told me that all his life long he never got over the thrill of pleasure and

interest which accompanied the first sight in type of anything he had written. After he had sent a manuscript to the printer he was as eager to see his words set up in the proof-sheet as any young adventurer into letters possibly could be. He never shirked labor, mental or bodily. He rarely declined, if the object were a good one, taking the chair at a public meeting, or accepting a charitable trust. Many widows and orphans of deceased literary men have for years been benefited by his wise trusteeship or counsel, and he spent a great portion of his time personally looking after the property of the poor whose interests were under his control. He was, as has been intimated, one of the most industrious of men, and marvellous stories are told (not by himself) of what he has accomplished in a given time in literary and social matters. His studies were all from nature and life, and his habits of observation were untiring. If he contemplated writing "Hard Times," he arranged with the master of Astley's circus to spend many hours behind the scenes with the riders and among the horses; and if the composition of the "Tale of Two Cities" were occupying his thoughts, he could banish himself to France for two years to prepare for that great work. Hogarth pencilled on his thumb-nail a striking face in a crowd that he wished to preserve; Dickens with his transcendent memory chronicled in his mind whatever of interest met his

eye or reached his ear, any time or anywhere. Speaking of memory one day, he said the memory of children was prodigious; it was a mistake to fancy children ever forgot anything. When he was delineating the character of Mrs. Pipchin, he had in his mind an old lodging-house keeper in an English watering-place where he was living with his father and mother when he was but two years old. After the book was written he sent it to his sister, who wrote back at once: "Good heavens! what does this mean? you have painted our lodging-house keeper, and you were but two years old at that time!" Characters and incidents crowded the chambers of his brain, all ready for use when occasion required. No subject of human interest was ever indifferent to him, and never a day went by that did not afford him some suggestion to be utilized in the future.

His favorite mode of exercise was walking; and when in America, scarcely a day passed, no matter what the weather, that he did not accomplish his eight or ten miles. It was on these expeditions that he liked to recount to the companion of his rambles stories and incidents of his early life; and when he was in the mood, his fun and humor knew no bounds. He would then frequently discuss the numerous characters in his delightful books, and would act out, on the road, dramatic situations, where *Nickleby* or *Copperfield* or *Swiveller* would

play distinguished parts. I remember he said, on one of these occasions, that during the composition of his first stories he could never entirely dismiss the characters about whom he happened to be writing; that while the "Old Curiosity Shop" was in process of composition Little Nell followed him about everywhere; that while he was writing "Oliver Twist" Fagin the Jew would never let him rest, even in his most retired moments; that at midnight and in the morning, on the sea and on the land, Tiny Tim and Little Bob Cratchit were ever tugging at his coat-sleeve, as if impatient for him to get back to his desk and continue the story of their lives. But he said after he had published several books, and saw what serious demands his characters were accustomed to make for the constant attention of his already overtaxed brain, he resolved that the phantom individuals should no longer intrude on his hours of recreation and rest, but that when he closed the door of his study he would shut them all in, and only meet them again when he came back to resume his task. That force of will with which he was so pre-eminently endowed enabled him to ignore these manifold existences till he chose to renew their acquaintance. He said also that when the children of his brain had once been launched, free and clear of him, into the world, they would sometimes turn up in the most unexpected manner to look their father in the face.

Sometimes he would pull my arm while we were walking together and whisper, "Let us avoid Mr Pumblechook, who is crossing the street to meet us"; or, "Mr Micawber is coming; let us turn down this alley to get out of his way." He always seemed to enjoy the fun of his comic people, and had unceasing mirth over Mr Pickwick's misadventures. In answer one day to a question, prompted by psychological curiosity, if he ever dreamed of any of his characters, his reply was, "Never; and I am convinced that no writer (judging from my own experience, which cannot be altogether singular, but must be a type of the experience of others) has ever dreamed of the creatures of his own imagination. It would," he went on to say, "be like a man's dreaming of meeting himself, which is clearly an impossibility. Things exterior to one's self must always be the basis of dreams." The growing up of characters in his mind never lost for him a sense of the marvellous. "What an unfathomable mystery there is in it all!" he said one day. Taking up a wineglass, he continued: "Suppose I choose to call this a *character*, fancy it a man, endue it with certain qualities; and soon the fine filmy webs of thought, almost impalpable, coming from every direction, we know not whence, spin and weave about it, until it assumes form and beauty, and becomes instinct with life."

In society Dickens rarely referred to the traits

and characteristics of people he had known; but during a long walk in the country he delighted to recall and describe the peculiarities, eccentric and otherwise, of dead and gone as well as living friends. Then Sydney Smith and Jeffrey and Christopher North and Talfourd and Hood and Rogers seemed to live over again in his vivid reproductions, made so impressive by his marvellous memory and imagination. As he walked rapidly along the road, he appeared to enjoy the keen zest of his companion in the numerous impersonations with which he was indulging him.

He always had much to say of animals as well as of men, and there were certain dogs and horses he had met and known intimately which it was specially interesting to him to remember and picture. There was a particular dog in Washington which he was never tired of delineating. The first night Dickens read in the Capital this dog attracted his attention. "He came into the hall by himself," said he, "got a good place before the reading began, and paid strict attention throughout. He came the second night, and was ignominiously shown out by one of the check-takers. On the third night he appeared again with another dog, which he had evidently promised to pass in free, but you see," continued Dickens, "upon the imposition being unmasked, the other dog apologized by a howl and withdrew. His intentions, no doubt,

were of the best, but he afterwards rose to explain outside, with such inconvenient eloquence to the reader and his audience, that they were obliged to put him down stairs."

He was such a firm believer in the mental faculties of animals, that it would have gone hard with a companion with whom he was talking, if a doubt were thrown, however inadvertently, on the mental intelligence of any four-footed friend that chanced to be at the time the subject of conversation. All animals which he took under his especial patronage seemed to have a marked affection for him. Quite a colony of dogs has always been a feature at Gad's Hill. Writing in 1868 to a young person in Boston, who was once the owner of his Newfoundland dog, Don, Dickens says: "The said dog has grown very big and fat, and is the father of a son exactly like him, who is named Bumble. Don and Bumble and four other very large dogs accompany their master in his country walks, and are the terror of all beholders. When Bumble was a very small dog indeed (though large enough to know better) he ate up his father's dinner, and also the dinners of the four other very large dogs, and immediately fainted away."

In many walks and talks with Dickens, his conversation, now, alas! so imperfectly recalled, frequently ran on the habits of birds, the raven, of course, interesting him particularly. He always

liked to have a raven hopping about his grounds, and whoever has read the new Preface to "Barnaby Rudge" must remember several of his old friends in that line. He had quite a fund of canary-bird anecdotes, and the pert ways of birds that picked up worms for a living afforded him infinite amusement. He would give a capital imitation of the way a robin-redbreast cocks his head on one side preliminary to a dash forward in the direction of a wriggling victim. There is a small grave at Gad's Hill to which Dickens would occasionally take a friend, and it was quite a privilege to stand with him beside the burial-place of little Dick, the family's favorite canary.

What a treat it was to go with him to the London Zoological Gardens, a place he greatly delighted in at all times ! He knew the zoological address of every animal, bird, and fish of any distinction ; and he could, without the slightest hesitation, on entering the grounds, proceed straightway to the celebrities of claw or foot or fin. The delight he took in the hippopotamus family was most exhilarating. He entered familiarly into conversation with the huge, unwieldy creatures, and they seemed to understand him. Indeed, he spoke to all the unphilological inhabitants with a directness and tact which went home to them at once. He chaffed with the monkeys, coaxed the tigers, and bamboozled the snakes, with a dexterity unapproachable. All the

keepers knew him, he was such a loyal visitor, and I noticed they came up to him in a friendly way, with the feeling that they had a sympathetic listener always in Charles Dickens.

There were certain books of which Dickens liked to talk during his walks. Among his especial favorites were the writings of Cobbett, DeQuincy, the Lectures on Moral Philosophy by Sydney Smith, and Carlyle's French Revolution. Of this latter Dickens said it was the book of all others which he read perpetually and of which he never tired, — the book which always appeared more imaginative in proportion to the fresh imagination he brought to it, a book for inexhaustibleness to be placed before every other book. When writing the "Tale of Two Cities," he asked Carlyle if he might see one of the works to which he referred in his history; whereupon Carlyle packed up and sent down to Gad's Hill *all* his reference volumes, and Dickens read them faithfully. But the more he read the more he was astonished to find how the facts had passed through the alembic of Carlyle's brain and had come out and fitted themselves, each as a part of one great whole, making a compact result, indestructible and unrivalled; and he always found himself turning away from the books of reference, and re-reading with increased wonder this marvellous new growth. There were certain books particularly hateful to him, and of which he never

spoke except in terms of most ludicrous rail-ry. Mr. Barlow, in "Sandford and Merton," he said was the favorite enemy of his boyhood and his first experience of a bore. He had an almost supernatural hatred for Barlow, 'because he was so very *instructive*, and always hinting doubts with regard to the veracity of 'Sindbad the Sailor,' and had no belief whatever in 'The Wonderful Lamp' or 'The Enchanted Horse.' " Dickens rattling his mental cane over the head of Mr. Barlow was as much better than any play as can be well imagined. He gloried in many of Hood's poems, especially in that biting Ode to Rae Wilson, and he would gesticulate with a fine fervor the lines,

" . . . the hypocrites who open Heaven's door
Obsequious to the sinful man of riches —
But put the wicked, naked, bare-legged poor
In parish *stools* instead of benches."

One of his favorite books was Pepys's Diary, the curious discovery of the key to which, and the odd characteristics of its writer, were a never-failing source of interest and amusement to him. The vision of Pepys hanging round the door of the theatre, hoping for an invitation to go in, not being able to keep away in spite of a promise he had made to himself that he would spend no more money foolishly, delighted him. Speaking one day of Gray, the author of the Elegy, he said: "No poet ever came walking down to posterity with so

small a book under his arm." He preferred Smollett to Fielding, putting "Peregrine Pickle" above "Tom Jones." Of the best novels by his contemporaries he always spoke with warm commendation, and "Griffith Gaunt" he thought a production of very high merit. He was "hospitable to the thought" of all writers who were really in earnest, but at the first exhibition of floundering or inexactness he became an unbeliever. People with dislocated understandings he had no tolerance for.

He was passionately fond of the theatre, loved the lights and music and flowers, and the happy faces of the audience; he was accustomed to say that his love of the theatre never failed, and, no matter how dull the play, he was always careful while he sat in the box to make no sound which could hurt the feelings of the actors, or show any lack of attention. His genuine enthusiasm for Mr. Fechter's acting was most interesting. He loved to describe seeing him first, quite by accident, in Paris, having strolled into a little theatre there one night. "He was making love to a woman," Dickens said, "and he so elevated her as well as himself by the sentiment in which he enveloped her, that they trod in a purer ether, and in another sphere, quite lifted out of the present. 'By heavens!' I said to myself, 'a man who can do this can do anything.' I never saw two people more

purely and instantly elevated by the power of love. The manner, also," he continued, "in which he presses the hem of the dress of Lucy in the *Bride of Lammermoor* is something wonderful. The man has genius in him which is unmistakable."

Life behind the scenes was always a fascinating study to Dickens. "One of the oddest sights a green-room can present," he said one day, "is when they are collecting children for a pantomime. For this purpose the prompter calls together all the women in the ballet, and begins giving out their names in order, while they press about him eager for the chance of increasing their poor pay by the extra pittance their children will receive. 'Mrs. Johnson, how many?' 'Two, sir.' 'What ages?' 'Seven and ten.' 'Mrs. B., how many?' and so on, until the required number is made up. The people who go upon the stage, however poor their pay or hard their lot, love it too well ever to adopt another vocation of their free-will. A mother will frequently be in the wardrobe, children in the pantomime, elder sisters in the ballet, etc."

Dickens's habits as a speaker differed from those of most orators. He gave no thought to the composition of the speech he was to make till the day before he was to deliver it. No matter whether the effort was to be a long or a short one, he never wrote down a word of what he was going to say;

but when the proper time arrived for him to consider his subject, he took a walk into the country and the thing was done. When he returned he was all ready for his task.

He liked to talk about the audiences that came to hear him read, and he gave the palm to his Parisian one, saying it was the quickest to catch his meaning. Although he said there were many always present in his room in Paris who did not fully understand English, yet the French eye is so quick to detect expression that it never failed instantly to understand what he meant by a look or an act. "Thus, for instance," he said, "when I was impersonating Steerforth in 'David Copperfield,' and gave that peculiar grip of the hand to Emily's lover, the French audience burst into cheers and rounds of applause." He said with reference to the preparation of his readings, that it was three months' hard labor to get up one of his own stories for public recitation, and he thought he had greatly improved his presentation of the "Christmas Carol" while in this country. He considered the storm scene in "David Copperfield" one of the most effective of his readings. The character of Jack Hopkins in "Bob Sawyer's Party" he took great delight in representing, and as Jack was a prime favorite of mine, he brought him forward whenever the occasion prompted. He always spoke of Hopkins as my particular friend, and he was constantly

quoting him, taking on the peculiar voice and turn of the head which he gave Jack in the public reading.

It gave him a natural pleasure when he heard quotations from his own books introduced without effort into conversation. He did not always remember, when his own words were quoted, that he was himself the author of them, and appeared astounded at the memory of others in this regard. He said Mr. Secretary Stanton had a most extraordinary knowledge of his books, and a power of taking the text up at any point, which he supposed to belong to only one person, and that person not himself.

It was said of Garrick that he was the *cheerfullest* man of his age. This can be as truly said of Charles Dickens. In his presence there was perpetual sunshine, and gloom was banished as having no sort of relationship with him. No man suffered more keenly or sympathized more fully than he did with want and misery, but his motto was, "Don't stand and cry; press forward and help remove the difficulty." The speed with which he was accustomed to make the deed follow his yet speedier sympathy was seen pleasantly on the day of his visit to the School-ship in Boston Harbor. He said, previously to going on board that ship, nothing would tempt him to make a speech, for he should always be obliged to do it on similar occa-

sions, if he broke through his rule so early in his reading tour. But Judge Russell had no sooner finished his simple talk, to which the boys listened, as they always do, with eager faces, than Dickens rose as if he could not help it, and with a few words so magnetized them that they wore their hearts in their eyes as if they meant to keep the words forever. An enthusiastic critic once said of John Ruskin, "that he could discover the Apocalypse in a daisy." As noble a discovery may be claimed for Dickens. He found all the fair humanities blooming in the lowliest hovel. He never *put on* the good Samaritan: that character was native to him. Once while in this country, on a bitter, freezing afternoon, — night coming down in a drifting snow-storm, — he was returning with me from a long walk in the country. The wind and baffling sleet were so furious that the street in which we happened to be fighting our way was quite deserted; it was almost impossible to see across it, the air was so thick with the tempest; all conversation between us had ceased, for it was only possible to breast the storm by devoting our whole energies to keeping on our feet; we seemed to be walking in a different atmosphere from any we had ever before encountered. All at once I missed Dickens from my side. What had become of him? Had he gone down in the drift, utterly exhausted, and was the snow burying him out of sight? Very soon the sound of his

cheery voice was heard on the other side of the way. With great difficulty, over the piled-up snow, I struggled across the street, and there found him lifting up, almost by main force, a blind old man who had got bewildered by the storm, and had fallen down unnoticed, quite unable to proceed. Dickens, a long distance away from him, with that tender, sensitive, and penetrating vision, ever on the alert for suffering in any form, had rushed at once to the rescue, comprehending at a glance the situation of the sightless man. To help him to his feet and aid him homeward in the most natural and simple way afforded Dickens such a pleasure as only the benevolent by intuition can understand.

Throughout his life Dickens was continually receiving tributes from those he had benefited, either by his books or by his friendship. There is an odd and very pretty story (vouched for here as true) connected with the influence he so widely exerted. In the winter of 1869, soon after he came up to London to reside for a few months, he received a letter from a man telling him that he had begun life in the most humble way possible, and that he considered he owed his subsequent great success and such education as he had given himself entirely to the encouragement and cheering influence he had derived from Dickens's books, of which he had been a constant reader from his childhood. He had been made a partner in his master's business, and when

the head of the house died, the other day, it was found he had left the whole of his large property to this man. As soon as he came into possession of this fortune, his mind turned to Dickens, whom he looked upon as his benefactor and teacher, and his first desire was to tender him some testimonial of gratitude and veneration. He then begged Dickens to accept a large sum of money. Dickens declined to receive the money, but his unknown friend sent him instead two silver table ornaments of great intrinsic value bearing this inscription: "To Charles Dickens, from one who has been cheered and stimulated by his writings, and held the author amongst his first Remembrances when he became prosperous." One of these silver ornaments was supported by three figures, representing three seasons. In the original design there were, of course, four, but the donor was so averse to associating the idea of Winter in any sense with Dickens that he caused the workman to alter the design and leave only the *cheerful* seasons. No event in the great author's career was ever more gratifying and pleasant to him.

His friendly notes were exquisitely turned, and are among his most charming compositions. They abound in felicities only like himself. In 1860 he wrote to me while I was sojourning in Italy: "I should like to have a walk through Rome with you this bright morning (for it really *is* bright in London), and convey you over some favorite ground of

mine. I used to go up the street of Tombs, past the tomb of Cecilia Metella, away out upon the wild campagna, and by the old Appian Road (easily tracked out among the ruins and primroses), to Albano. There, at a very dirty inn, I used to have a very dirty lunch, generally with the family's dirty linen lying in a corner, and inveigle some very dirty Vetturino in sheep-skin to take me back to Rome."

In a little note in answer to one I had written consulting him about the purchase of some old furniture in London he wrote: "There is a chair (without a bottom) at a shop near the office, which I think would suit you. It cannot stand of itself, but will almost suit somebody, if you put it in a corner, and prop one leg up with two wedges and cut another leg off. The proprietor asks £20, but says he admires literature and would take £18. He is of republican principles and I think would take £17 19s. 6d. from a cousin; shall I secure this prize? It is very ugly and wormy, and it is related, but without proof, that on one occasion Washington declined to sit down in it."

Here are the last two missives I ever received from his dear, kind hand:—

5 HYDE PARK PLACE, LONDON, W.

Friday, January 14, 1870

MY DEAR FIELDS: We live here (opposite the Marble Arch) in a charming house until the 1st of June, and then

return to Gad's. The Conservatory is completed, and is a brilliant success; — but an expensive one!

I read this afternoon at three, — a beastly proceeding which I particularly hate, — and again this day week at three. These morning readings particularly disturb me at my book-work; nevertheless I hope, please God, to lose no way on their account. An evening reading once a week is nothing. By the by, I recommenced last Tuesday evening with the greatest brilliancy.

I should be quite ashamed of not having written to you and my dear Mrs. Fields before now, if I did n't know that you will both understand how occupied I am, and how naturally, when I put my papers away for the day, I get up and fly. I have a large room here, with three fine windows, overlooking the Park, — unsurpassable for airiness and cheerfulness.

You saw the announcement of the death of poor dear Harness. The circumstances are curious. He wrote to his old friend the Dean of Battle saying he would come to visit him on that day (the day of his death). The Dean wrote back: "Come next day, instead, as we are obliged to go out to dinner, and you will be alone." Harness told his sister a little impatiently that he *must* go on the first-named day, — that he had made up his mind to go, and *MUST*. He had been getting himself ready for dinner, and came to a part of the staircase whence two doors opened, — one, upon another level passage; one, upon a flight of stone steps. He opened the wrong door, fell down the steps, injured himself very severely, and died in a few hours.

You will know — *I* don't — what Fechter's success is in America at the time of this present writing. In his farewell performances at the Princess's he acted very finely. I thought the three first acts of his Hamlet very much better than I had ever thought them before, — and I always thought very highly of them. We gave him a foaming stirrup cup at Gad's Hill.

Forster (who has been ill with his bronchitis again) thinks

No. 2 of the new book (Edwin Drood) a clincher, — I mean that word (as his own expression) for *Clincher*. There is a curious interest steadily working up to No. 5, which requires a great deal of art and self-denial. I think also, apart from character and picturesqueness, that the young people are placed in a very novel situation. So I hope — at Nos. 5 and 6 the story will turn upon an interest suspended until the end.

I can't believe it, and don't, and won't, but they say Harry's twenty-first birthday is next Sunday. I have entered him at the Temple just now; and if he don't get a fellowship at Trinity Hall when his time comes, I shall be disappointed, if in the present disappointed state of existence.

I hope you may have met with the little touch of Radicalism I gave them at Birmingham in the words of Buckle? With pride I observe that it makes the regular political traders, of all sorts, perfectly mad. Such was my intentions, as a grateful acknowledgment of having been misrepresented.

I think Mrs. —'s prose very admirable, but I don't believe it! No, I do *not*. My conviction is that those Islanders get frightfully bored by the Islands, and wish they had never set eyes upon them!

Charley Collins has done a charming cover for the monthly part of the new book. At the very earnest representations of Millais (and after having seen a great number of his drawings) I am going to engage with a new man; retaining, of course, C. C.'s cover aforesaid. K—— has made some more capital portraits, and is always improving.

My dear Mrs. Fields, if "He" (made proud by chairs and bloated by pictures) does not give you my dear love, let us conspire against him when you find him out, and exclude him from all future confidences. Until then

Ever affectionately yours and his,

C. D.

5 HYDE PARK PLACE, LONDON, W.,
Monday, April 18, 1870.

MY DEAR FIELDS: I have been hard at work all day until post time, and have only leisure to acknowledge the receipt, the day before yesterday, of your note containing such good news of Fechter, and to assure you of my undiminished regard and affection.

We have been doing wonders with No. 1 of Edwin Drood
It has very, very far outstripped every one of its predecessors
Ever your affectionate friend,

CHARLES DICKENS

Bright colors were a constant delight to him, and the gay hues of flowers were those most welcome to his eye. When the rhododendrons were in bloom in Cobham Park, the seat of his friend and neighbor, Lord Darnley, he always counted on taking his guests there to enjoy the magnificent show. He delighted to turn out for the delectation of his Transatlantic cousins a couple of postillions in the old red jackets of the old red royal Dover road, making the ride as much as possible like a holiday drive in England fifty years ago.

When in the mood for humorous characterization, Dickens's hilarity was most amazing. To hear him tell a ghost-story with a very florid imitation of a very pallid ghost, or hear him sing an old-time stage song, such as he used to enjoy in his youth at a cheap London theatre, to see him imitate a lion in a menagerie-cage, or the clown in a pantomime when he flops and folds himself up like a jack-knife, or to join with him in some mirthful

game of his own composing, was to become acquainted with one of the most delightful and original companions in the world.

On one occasion, during a walk with me, he chose to run into the wildest of vagaries about *conversation*. The ludicrous vein he indulged in during that two hours' stretch can never be forgotten. Among other things, he said he had often thought how restricted one's conversation must become when one was visiting a man who was to be hanged in half an hour. He went on in a most surprising manner to imagine all sorts of difficulties in the way of becoming interesting to the poor fellow. "Suppose," said he, 'it should be a rainy morning while you are making the call, you could not possibly indulge in the remark, 'We shall have fine weather to-morrow, sir,' for what would that be to him? For my part, I think,' said he, "I should confine my observations to the days of Julius Cæsar or King Alfred."

At another time when speaking of what was constantly said about him in certain newspapers, he observed: "I notice that about once in every seven years I become the victim of a paragraph disease. It breaks out in England, travels to India by the overland route, gets to America per Cunard line, strikes the base of the Rocky Mountains, and, rebounding back to Europe, mostly perishes on the steppes of Russia from inanition and extreme cold."

When he felt he was not under observation, and that tomfoolery would not be frowned upon or gazed at with astonishment, he gave himself up without reserve to healthy amusement and strengthening mirth. It was his mission to make people happy. Words of good cheer were native to his lips, and he was always doing what he could to lighten the lot of all who came into his beautiful presence. His talk was simple, natural, and direct, never dropping into circumlocution nor elocution. Now that he is gone, whoever has known him intimately for any considerable period of time will linger over his tender regard for, and his engaging manner with, children; his cheery "Good day" to poor people he happened to be passing in the road; his trustful and earnest "Please God," when he was promising himself any special pleasure, like rejoining an old friend or returning again to scenes he loved. At such times his voice had an irresistible pathos in it, and his smile diffused a sensation like music. When he came into the presence of squalid or degraded persons, such as one sometimes encounters in almshouses or prisons, he had such soothing words to scatter here and there, that those who had been "most hurt by the archers" listened gladly, and loved him without knowing who it was that found it in his heart to speak so kindly to them.

Oftentimes during long walks in the streets and

by-ways of London, or through the pleasant Kentish lanes, or among the localities he has rendered forever famous in his books, I have recalled the sweet words in which Shakespeare has embalmed one of the characters in *Love's Labor's Lost* : —

“ A merrier man,
Within the limit of becoming mirth,
I never spent an hour's talk withal ;
His eye begets occasion for his wit ;
For every object that the one doth catch
The other turns to a mirth-moving jest,
Which his fair tongue, conceit's expositor,
Delivers in such apt and gracious words
That aged ears play truant at his tales,
And younger hearings are quite ravished ;
So sweet and voluble is his discourse.”

Twenty years ago Daniel Webster said that Dickens had already done more to ameliorate the condition of the English poor than all the statesmen Great Britain had sent into Parliament. During the unceasing demands upon his time and thought, he found opportunities of visiting personally those haunts of suffering in London which needed the keen eye and sympathetic heart to bring them before the public for relief. Whoever has accompanied him, as I have, on his midnight walks into the cheap lodging-houses provided for London's lowest poor, cannot have failed to learn lessons never to be forgotten. Newgate and Smithfield were lifted out of their abominations by his eloquent

from "Tristan," for example, might be made; the voices are hardly necessary here: as everyone knows, several of Wagner's vocal scenes, such as the Liebestod and the Good Friday music, make completely satisfactory orchestral pieces. The film could give us an ideal garden in place of the tawdry canvas of the theatre, and ideally beautiful young lovers in place of the usual disillusioning hero and heroine, who are chosen for their voices rather than their appearance. All that would be required in the way of acting would be a few simple movements and gestures to the accompaniment of that glorious music. I have always regretted, too, that although the shop window seems never to change, it is changing slowly all the time. He has now written a book about his treasures and his customers, and his adventures among bookworms. He has had collectors of all sorts, rich and poor, likely and unlikely. It was a bookmaker (racing) who gave him his first real start by buying for forty-five shillings "Dombey and Son" in the original monthly parts, and commissioned him to seek out Dickens's serials for him. Mr. Spencer bought a perfect Pickwick for £70, and helped him to compile an exhaustive Dickens collection. His patron was a Paris bookmaker, an Englishman, but he did not discover that till long afterwards. Some of his customers were very shy about the delivery of their books, having sensible wives. One of them was a French nobleman.

